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SHARIF

PAKISTAN: DRAMATIC CHANGE

OPINION POLL: FATEHPUR AND AMETHI

INDIA

NOVEMBER 15, 1990

TODAY

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V.P. SINGH

DRAWING THE BATTLELINES

By backing the Mandal report and taking a firm stand on the Ayodhya issue, V.P. Singh is trying to forge a strategy for a snap poll.

- The Collapse of a Prime Minister
- BJP: Electoral Gamble
- Congress(I): Dilemma of Opportunity

INTERVIEWS: V.P. Singh, Rajiv Gandhi, L.K. Advani

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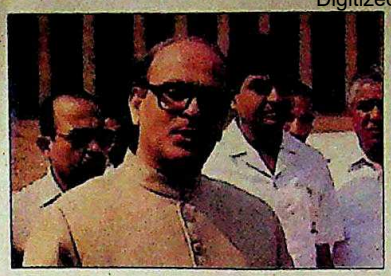


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Drawing the Battlelines

The machinations and blunders of V.P. Singh have led the National Front to disaster. Yet the future is fraught with uncertainty. The BJP is not sure if its revivalist campaign will translate into votes, whereas the Congress(I) is happy to see V.P. Singh go but doesn't want power on a weak wicket.

COVER STORY 22



A Dramatic Change

Amid charges of rigging, the IJI has swept to power, giving Benazir Bhutto's PPP a drubbing. But the party's troubles may have just begun. The IJI may have trouble staying together and delivering its tall election rhetoric. An on-the-spot report and interviews with Nawaz Sharif and Benazir.

SPECIAL REPORT 46



Tale of two Boroughs

An opinion poll in the country's two premier constituencies, Amethi and Fatehpur, provides startling insights. Rajiv Gandhi decisively pips V.P. Singh and L.K. Advani in both places. Also, a look at what has happened to the two constituencies since the last general elections.

SPECIAL REPORT 40



Vying for the Viewers

Thanks to the yawn-inducing programmes that Doordarshan broadcasts, entrepreneurs are now putting up private cable TVs to provide entertainment to subscribers. And there are more than 25,000 dish antennae in the country giving users access to exciting foreign programmes.

BUSINESS FEATURE 115



Seeds of Strife

The Mandal Commission report has not only sparked off anger in urban areas, but also triggered off latent caste tensions in the rural areas. In Bihar, in particular, this has erupted in violence, arson and killings as traditional rivals such as Bhumihars and Yadavs have attacked each other.

SPECIAL FEATURE 165



A Forgotten Treasure

Damerala Rama Rao, who was in the forefront of the renaissance of art in Andhra Pradesh in the 1920s, has been obscured, reduced to a mere footnote in art history. But the painter is a master whose legacy needs to be salvaged, and accorded its deserved place among Indian masterworks.

ART 106

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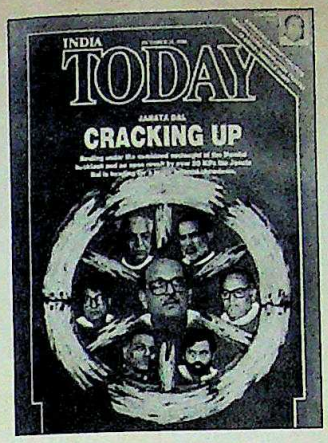
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DIVIDED WE STAND

Your cover story ("Cracking Up", October 30) highlights the internal wranglings plaguing the ruling Janata Dal. It is unfortunate that internal dissidence—29 MPs demanding the prime minister's resignation—threatens the survival of this government. In spite of the massive counter-offensive launched by his supporters within and outside the party, V.P. Singh is clearly walking a tightrope.

New Delhi — D. SINGH

POLITICAL GAMES

Rather than resolving the crises that face the nation, politicians are busy playing the vote game ("Politics of Nihilism", October 15). While V.P. Singh is attempting to get a hold over the backward sections of society, the BJP is playing the Hindu card. The Congress (I) is taking advantage of the anti-Mandal agitation. It is clear that the nation will be the ultimate loser.

Gurdaspur — SANJEEV SANWAL

RELIGIOUS FRENZY

India is secular only because it is a Hindu majority country ("BJP on the Warpath", October 15). The Rath Yatra is not a vote grabbing exercise but an attempt to preserve secularism.

Hyderabad — PRAMOD VALSANGKAR

■ L.K. Advani by embarking on the Ram Rath Yatra, hopes to undo the diverse impact that the implementation of the Mandal Commission report has had on the entire nation.

New Delhi — APOORV PANDEY

WORSE THAN BOFORS

The present Government has stirred a hornets' nest ("Tragic Toll", October 15) with its proposal to implement the Mandal report. A feeling of desperation and insecurity has gripped the entire nation. We can afford a Bofors or a Howitzer scandal but the future of the nation must not be endangered at any cost.

Bombay — V.D. SAMPAT

■ The self-immolations, apart from the terrible cost in physical and psychological suffering for all concerned, tend to divert attention from the deeper issues involved. The students should desist from making this ultimate sacrifice and resume their studies with renewed energy and determination to build a greater India.

New Delhi — KARAN SINGH

■ V.P. Singh's whimsical style of functioning has alienated the students, teachers, doctors, officers and even his own MPs, MLAs and those ministers who openly oppose the Mandal Commission report. However, the prime minister remains firm on reservations for the backward castes and not backward classes.

Bhubaneswar — S.N. MOHANTY

■ It is ironic that a hue and cry was not raised when the National Front released its manifesto stating its intention to implement the recommendations of the Mandal Commission.

New Delhi — PUNEET RAJHANS

■ The 52 per cent of our population which stands to gain if the Mandal report is implemented have been denied all this while because of self-centred politicians. It is thus unfair to weaken the authority of the prime minister who has boldly risen above lesser political leaders. He has decided to do what his personal convictions have compelled him to in the larger interests of the nation.

Pune — SURENDRA MOODLIAR

NO OTHER OPTION

Your story ("Hostage to a Crisis", October 15) is a wrong indictment of India's reaction to the Gulf crisis. Foreign policy is not an exercise in keeping the superpowers happy. With thousands of Indians stranded in Kuwait, there was no other option. Also, to say that it is short-sighted to inject a non-aligned dimension to the crisis is being myopic. Till economic multipolarity emerges only the NAM can provide a corrective balance.

Allahabad — RAJEEV PANT

■ The ongoing proceedings of the UN session have proved that most of the world is against invoking military options against Iraq. Union Minister for External Affairs I.K. Gujral's meetings at this session have made it clear that a peaceful settlement is desirable. India's backing of the UN as the right vehicle for bringing about a settlement has won the endorsement of the superpowers.

New Delhi — BIRENJIT S. SACHAR

■ You have exaggerated the risks India has taken by not completely toeing the American line. Even if a harder line on Iraq had been adopted, it would not have made any significant change to the US stand on India vis-a-vis Pakistan.

Calcutta — DEBASHIS BOSE

SITTING SMUG

Nihal Singh's criticism of the English language press coverage of the Gulf in his Mediawatch column ("Misplaced Priorities", October 15) was extremely valid. To a large extent the press caters to the provincial and insular mentality that characterises the majority of the people. The bigger the crisis abroad the less it disturbs our serene preoccupation with ourselves. The prime example of this is V.P. Singh's determination to implement the Mandal Commission report even as the Gulf crisis was escalating and the lives and fortunes of two million people were in jeopardy.

New Delhi — A.K. RAY

DISAPPOINTING DISPLAY

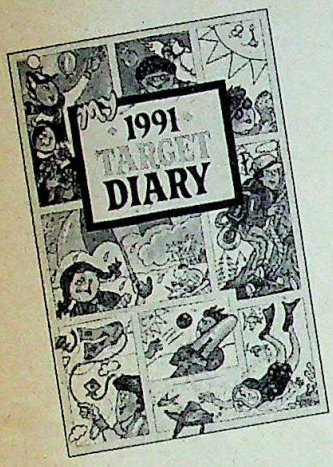
What has Ashwini Nachappa achieved to merit a cover photograph ("Promising Prospects", September 30). With such publicity, the pressure reflected on her performance.

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Vishwanath Anand should have been accorded such an honour instead.

New Delhi — Dr ANIL SATWIK

■ It was agonising to see India's pathetic performance at the Asiad. What we need most is the development of the 'killer instinct' that can deliver the goods when needed. And perhaps we should give the entire responsibility of the Indian Olympic Committee to the armed forces which are free of political pressures and would select and groom talent with impartiality and discipline.

Dhaka — S. DASTANE

■ At every international platform India cries herself hoarse with the declaration of being the largest democracy in the world. However it is to our disgrace that out of an 80 crore population we are unable to produce even a handful of talented sportsmen.

Ludhiana — NARINDER MANGAT

■ India's only goal at the Beijing Asiad came in Kabaddi, proving that we are the number one nation in leg pulling and little else.

Nagpur — OM BIYANI

UNFULFILLED PROMISE

The revelation of documents indicating the involvement of the Union Minister for Commerce and Tourism, Arun Nehru ("Bofors Blast, September 30), has struck another blow to the Government. V.P. Singh came to power on the strength of Bofors but has failed to resolve the issue.

Noida — ROHIT RAJ

MISLEADING ANALYSIS

Your special report on Kashmir ("Subtle Shift", September 30), suggests that the present Governor Girish Saxena, has succeeded where his predecessor, Jagmohan, had failed. Without explaining the difference in circumstances, such a comparison can be misleading. If the cool laid-back approach averred by you appears more effective now, it is because the situation is not as desperate as it was then.

Udaipur — RAVEENDRA KRISHNA

■ You have failed miserably to make an accurate evaluation of the situation in the Valley in January 1990. Despite all odds, Jagmohan was able to break the back of the militants, a problem Saxena is unable to curb in spite of most things being in his favour.

Jammu — NIKHIL RAINA

DRIVING NEED

Efficient public transport facilities, within the cities as well as on the highways, are essential for reducing fuel consumption through reduction in the use of private vehicles ("The Third Shock", September 30). For instance, the efficient service provided by Bombay Electric Supply and Transport (BEST) has resulted in a decrease in the use of private vehicles.

Ahmedabad — KARTIK K. RAVAL

MISPLACED TRUST

V.P. Singh as an idealistic lonely crusader ("Wistful Fantasies", September 30) never existed. The instances of his hypocrisy and opportunism are numerous. Chicanery and intrigue are second nature to the man. Indeed, the 'bonnie' that the English folk song describes as dead, never existed in our prime minister's case.

New Delhi — Dr REGI THARIAN

MAKING A MARK

The photo feature on the Chettiars ("Relics of an Opulent Past", September 30) neglected to mention their Rs 35 lakh contribution in 1903 for renovationing the Shiva temple at Thiruvannamalai, Tamil Nadu. They rank with the Vijayanagara kings in maintaining Tamil cultural heritage.

Coonoor — Lt-Colonel BALA CHANDRAN (Retd)

TOWN FOR TAU

Your Tau-bashing in recent weeks is greatly appreciated. But your reporting of how far his power reaches is not accurate. On the south-west coast of Norway lies a little town called Tau.

Norway — VENU GOPAL NARAYANAN

FACTS ABOUT SAFL

Contrary to what your article ("Heading for a Clash" August 31), says I would like to point out that A.C. Muthiah was never removed from the vice-chairmanship of the company. It is also incorrect to say that the state Government took over the loss-making liquor company in March 1989, over-ruling the directives of the Board for Industrial and Financial Re-construction (BIFR). Finally, BIFR has not ordered a merger of SAFL with the joint sector Southern Petrochemicals Industries as stated.

Madras — LEENA NAIR, *Managing Director, Southern Agrifurane Industries Ltd*

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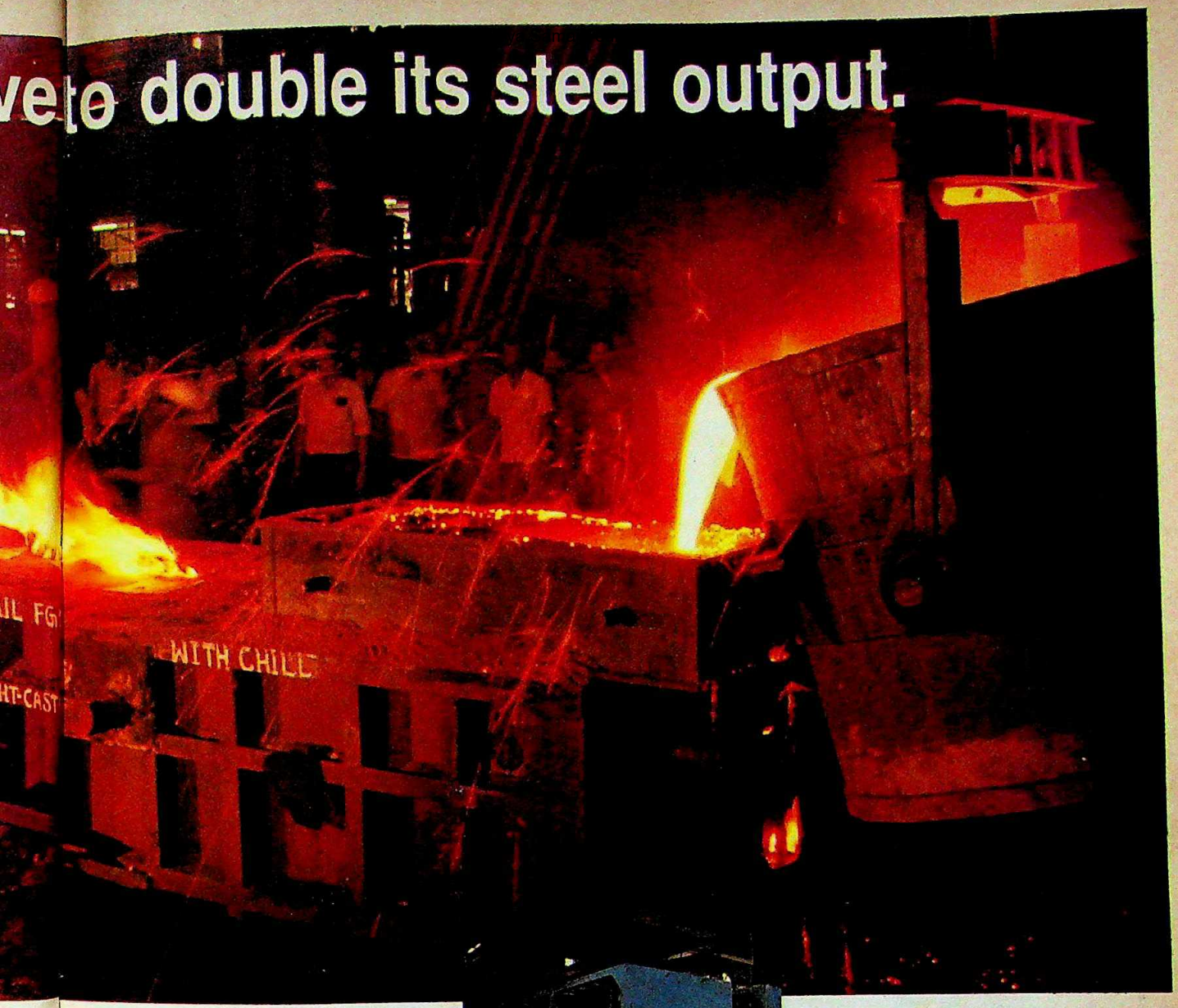
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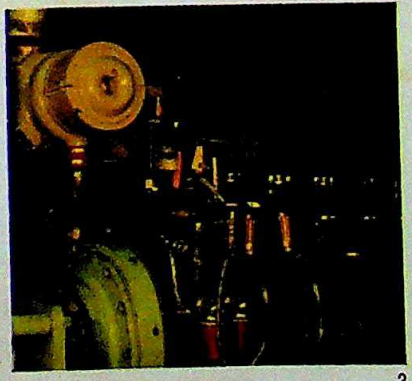


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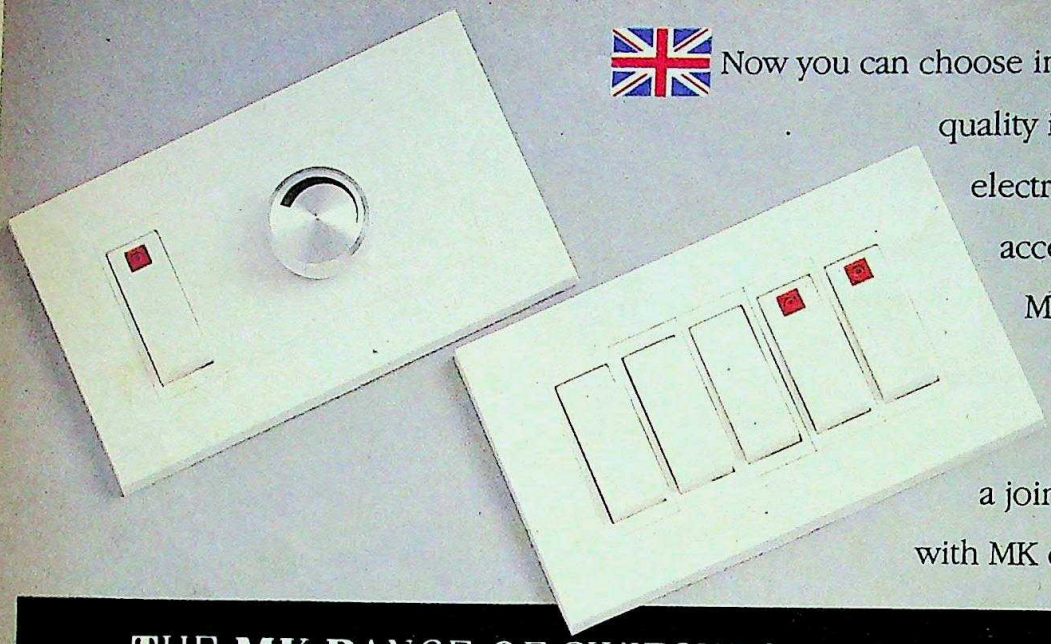
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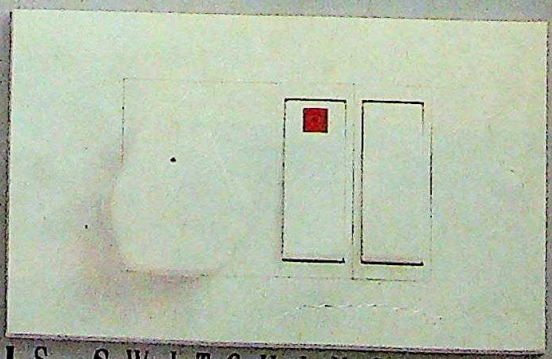


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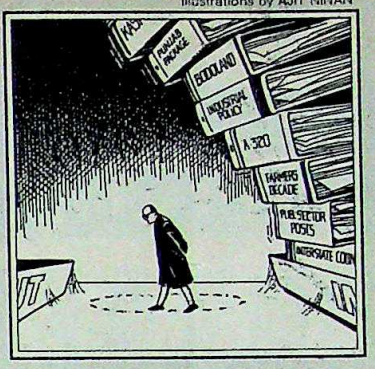
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Dangerous Drift

Illustrations by AJIT NINAN



As the Janata Dal leaders bunny-hop from crisis to crisis handing out palliatives, mouthing half-baked populist jargon, ducking or smothering challenges to the stability of their government, real governance—attempting to grapple with national problems—has been put on the backburner.

Prime Minister Vishwanath Pratap Singh's struggle for retaining his supremacy and his inept handling of the Mandal Commission report—and the media's reporting on these subjects—have pushed other critical issues into the back pages. They may be off the front pages, yes, but they're certainly not off the minds of the people.

Kashmir and Punjab remain festering sores. The Government was expected to undertake new initiatives last fortnight—a brand new economic package for Punjab and a visit by V.P. Singh to Srinagar. The nation is still waiting.

The North-east is in no better shape. With the Bodoland agitation growing increasingly violent, the AGP Government unable or unwilling to deal with it, and assembly elections due in December, the Centre has still to forge a comprehensive policy. There are no signs of any.

The Government's industrial policy is still keeping industrialists guessing. It was expected to announce a detailed list of ventures in which foreign investment will be allowed or disallowed as well as the extent of equity participation. No movement.

And what to do with those 14 expensive A320s which, except for their brief usage in evacuating Gulf refugees, are still virtually grounded at an enormous cost to the exchequer? The Aviation Ministry simply is unable to give any convincing answers.

During his Independence Day speech from the Red Fort, the prime minister declared the Decade of the Farmer. The rhetoric was to be followed by the release of a detailed agricultural policy aimed at tackling the problems of rural indebtedness, new investments and most of all the creation of jobs. Not even a blueprint so far in sight.

All the ministries, it seems, are paralysed. The promised reviews of the educational and cultural policies have not materialised. There's been no follow-up on the recent meeting of the Interstate Council on the revaluation of centre-state relationships. And at least 50 public sector undertakings including important ones like Air India and the National Textile Corporation are either without heads or middle-level managers.

The nation's governance is in abeyance while power-hungry politicians toy with crises of their own creation.

The Oil Slick



A total lack of imaginative management and exploitation of oil and gas reserves over the years are partly responsible for the shocking mess in which the country has landed itself. The dramatic increase in the administered prices of petroleum products cannot be blamed on the Gulf crisis alone. Equal blame must be shared by Indian officialdom and planners.

The Government had calculated all along that India's oil needs for 1990-1991 would be around 58 million tonnes. But the Oil and Natural Gas Commission is barely scraping the bottom of the barrel with a little over a pathetic 30 million tonnes of production. Worse, the amount has remained virtually stagnant for the last three years.

The approach has been wrong. The emphasis was laid on increasing production from a few wells—flogging Bombay High—without an all-out exploration of new ones. India's underground oil and gas reserves are estimated at approximately 17 billion tonnes. However, till now only 25 per cent of this amount has been converted into geologically proven reserves from which the product can be recovered economically.

For example, while oil production rose three-fold during the last decade, underground reserves of recoverable oil inched forward by a mere 20 per cent during the same period. This is a clear indication that this period witnessed a rapid depletion of existing oilwells with little or no concommitant efforts at making new discoveries.

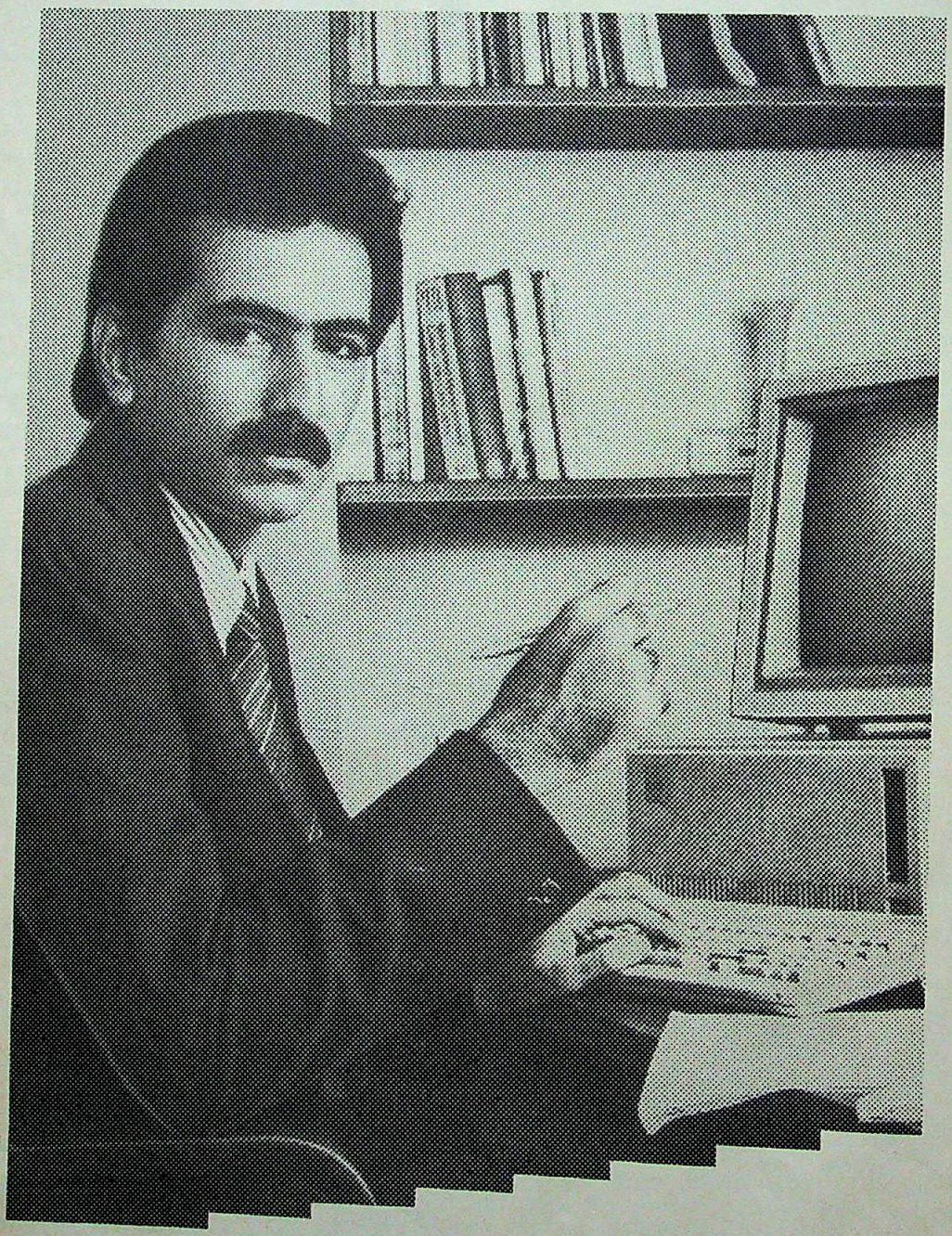
Another indicator of new oil exploration having been neglected is the ratio of wells per square kilometre. While the world average for drilling wells is about 100 per square kilometre, India has kept it at an astounding low of less than 10 per square kilometre. Given the huge profits that ONGC makes, it was not a question of money. The real reason was to enable the country's oil bureaucracy to make the inflated public relations claim that its success quotient—one successful well for every three drilled—was one of the highest in the world.

Compounding these factors is the Government's short-sightedness over the utilisation of natural gas. It is criminal that ONGC flares—simply burns—about 15 million cubic metres of gas daily off the west coast because there's no infrastructure to pipe it into industries such as fertilizer plants that can use it as a substitute for petroleum-based feedstock. The whole oil and gas situation must be tackled on a war footing with more imaginative approaches. What better opportunity to wake up than now.

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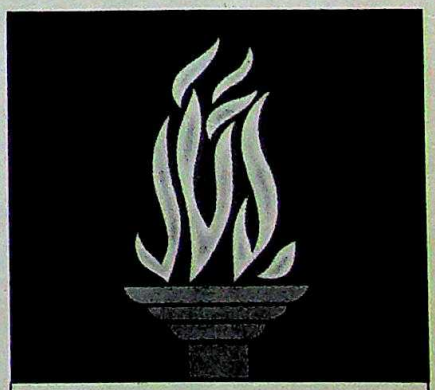
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		From	To
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2	13.25%	1.4.92	31.3.93
3	13.75%	1.4.93	31.3.94
4	14.25%	1.4.94	31.3.95
5	14.75%	1.4.95	31.3.96
6	14.75%	1.4.96	31.3.97
7	15.25%	1.4.97	31.3.98

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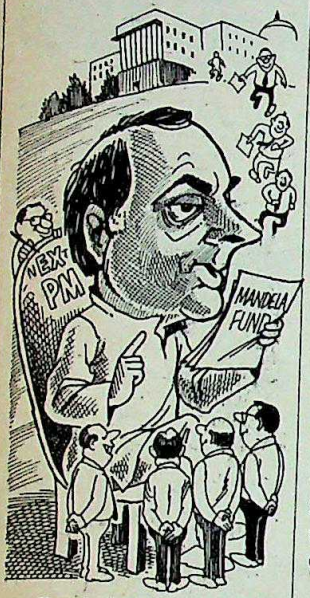
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Past his Prime

● One thing about Rajiv Gandhi is that even in defeat he has always thought of himself as prime ministerial. And many around him have treated him as such.



For the last 10 months he has remained surrounded by several coteries vying for his attention. And even while in the wilderness he has operated through a network of politicians and personal aides reminiscent of his days in office. His aides, including senior MPs, still refer to him as "the P.M." And the "P.M." has also maintained friendly contact with many of the senior bureaucrats who once served him.

This was in evidence during a VIP-packed reception for Nelson Mandela at Rashtrapati Bhavan. Rajiv came across one of his former aides and got straight to the point with prime ministerial bluntness: *"Kya paise de rahe ho ke nahi?"* (Are you giving money or not?) The aide taken aback for a moment mumbled something about efforts being made and meetings to be held to finalise the matter. Rajiv shot back with prime ministerial authority: "You must make sure he gets a good amount. He badly needs it for his cause." The bureaucrat listened respectfully and could well have said: "Yes, (former) prime minister."

Expensive Stay

● Commerce Minister Arun Nehru's drive to save foreign exchange was to have achieved major staff reductions in overseas offices of the State Trading Corporation, the India Investment Centre, the Tea Board, and others. But thanks to the inevitable wire-pulling, progress has been slow.

In New York, the office of the India Investment Centre, ordered wound up by August 31, has been inexplicably allowed an extension until the end of 1990. Its neighbour, the Tea Board, has survived world-wide cut-backs in its branches and its boss is adding to his record foreign stay: 16 years and still counting. It couldn't be on account of his sterling

Cartoons by AJIT NINAN



performance: tea exports to the US are declining.

Going Upmarket

● Situated on Delhi's Ashoka Road a few bungalows from each other, the two party offices seemed to compete for a shoddier-than-thou image. The CPI(M)



headquarters seemed to exult in its dilapidation. And at the other end of the political spectrum, the BJP office wallowed in eyesore-austerity.

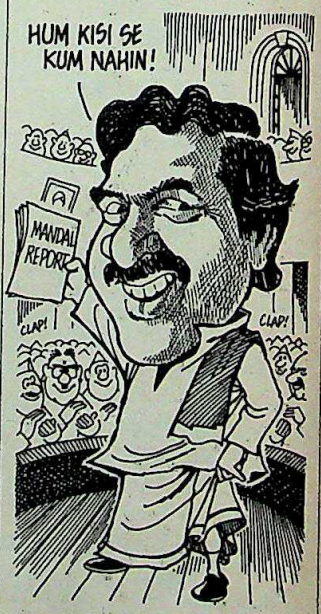
But new-found power—and proximity to government—is changing all that. The BJP office is getting a sprucing up—new interior decor, wall-to-wall carpets, upholstered chairs, a new electronic telephone board.

And in this era of *perestroika* the comrades refuse to be left behind. They're finalising plans for a new, plush three-storeyed party headquarters near the down-town Connaught Circus area. Now that swank is in and austerity is out, the Congress(I) should have no socialist qualms about finally shifting office to its own new fancy headquarters in Jawahar Bhavan.

Southern Mastery

● Hindi champions have suddenly discovered a new hero, and of all places, from the south. He is Ramesh Chennithala, the Youth Congress(I) president and MP from Kerala, who took Parliament by surprise recently when he delivered a 30-minute speech during the debate on the Mandal Commission report.

What made even veteran parliamentarians sit up was not so much the contents of Chennithala's admittedly learned peroration but the language he delivered it in: his uncorrupted Hindi would have done the poet Maithilisharan Gupta proud. And he spoke without the accent that has made south-Indian Hindi the butt of jokes since



comedian Mehmood parodied it in a hit film.

BJP leader Jaswant Singh complimented him. And a Janata Dal MP from Orissa expressed admiration for Chennithala's mastery over the language. Going by such praise, even a political enemy like Mulayam Singh Yadav should have no hesitation in proclaiming him Hindi Man of the Year.

TAIL PIECE

Seeking to solve fellow journalists' riddle over Nelson Mandela's reported endorsement of the Mandal Commission recommendations, a veteran scribe commented at the African National Congress leader's press conference: "He must have taken Mandal as the poor man's Mandela."

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We bid farewell before the first glow of youth has faded.



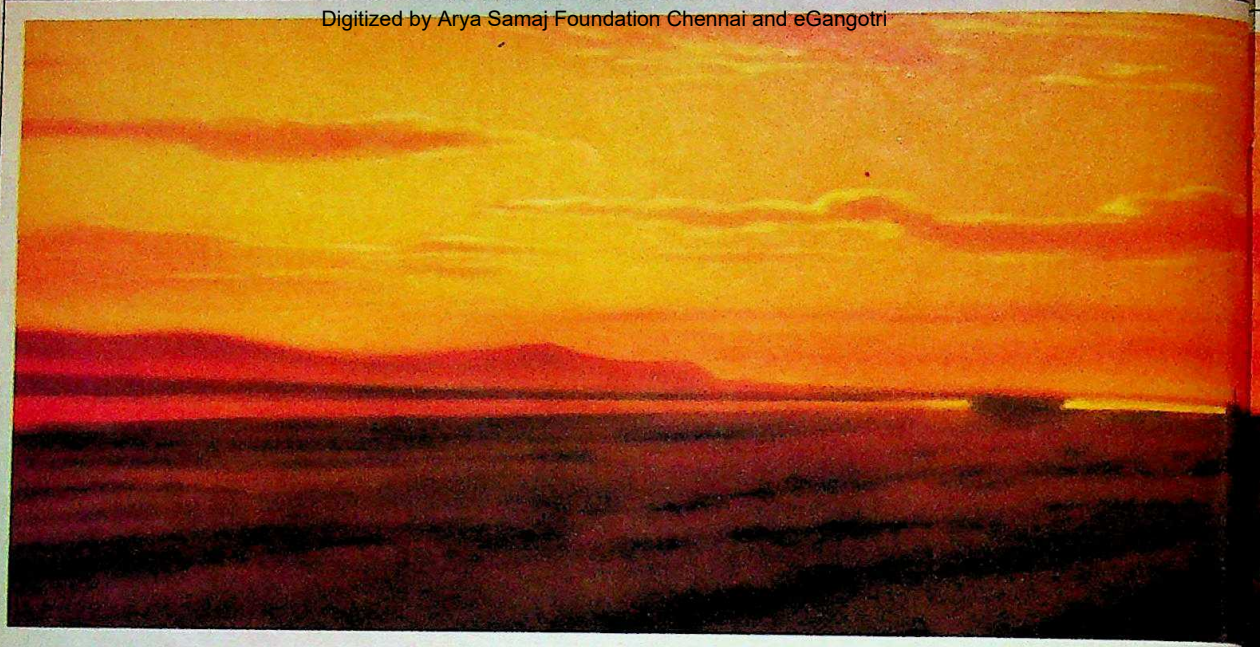
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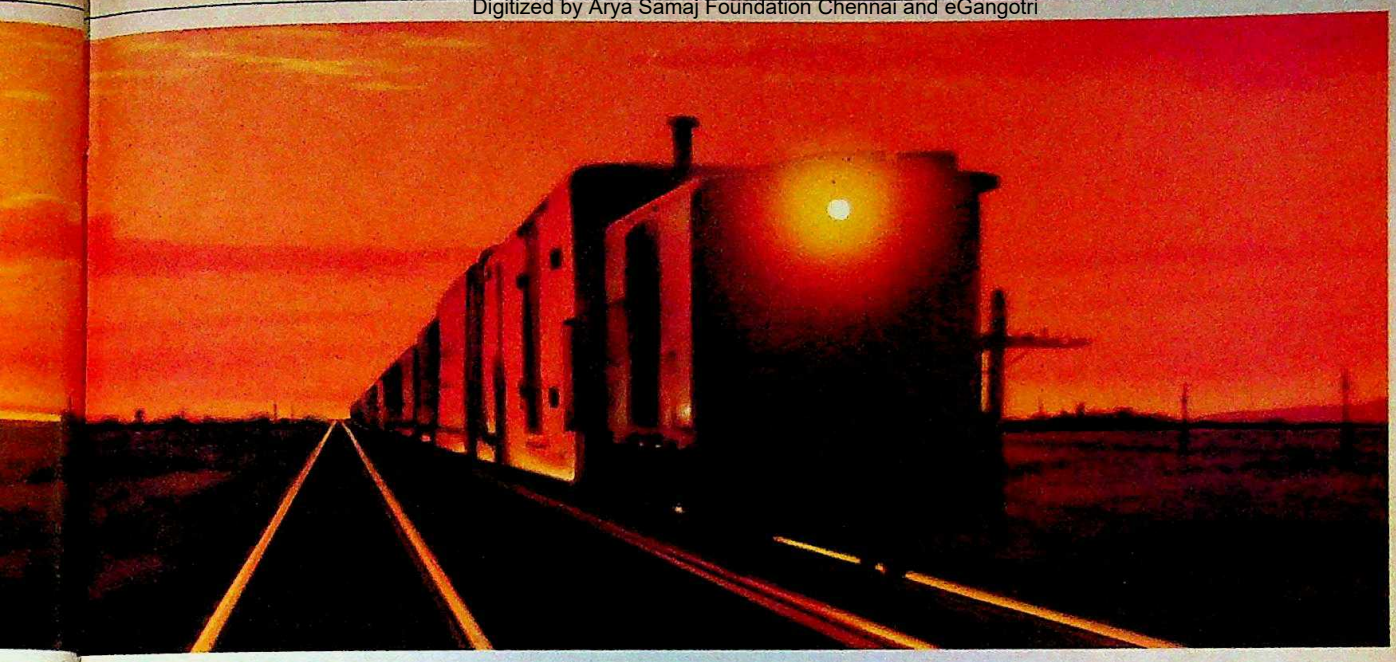
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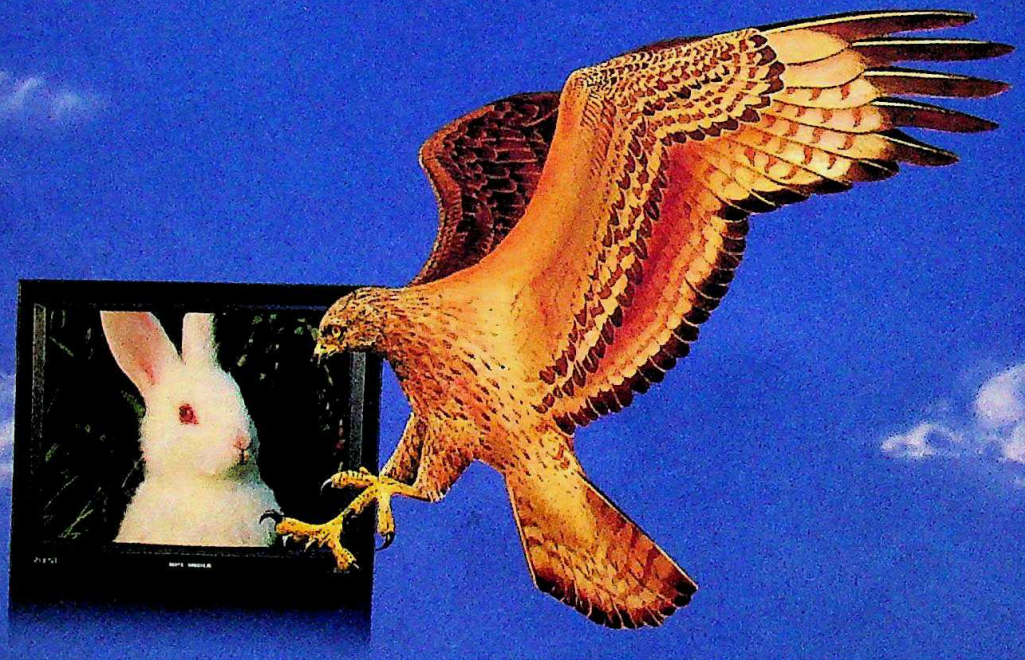
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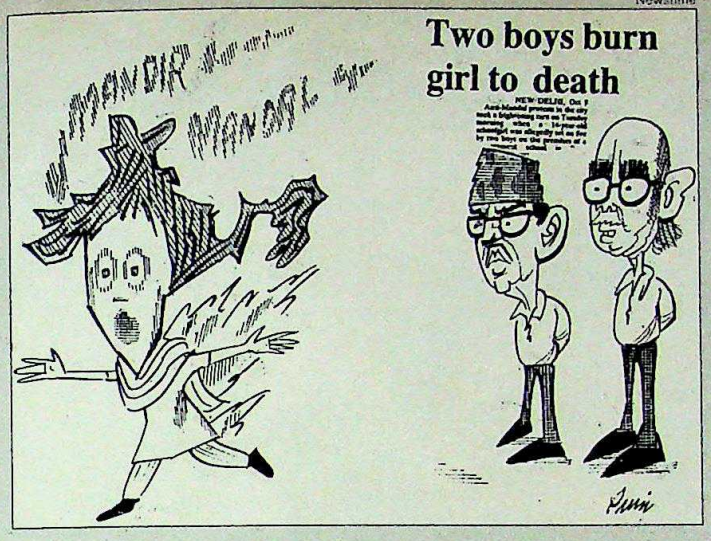
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Newstime



• *Let them try and enter Ayodhya. We will teach them the meaning of law. No masjid will be broken.* ■ MULAYAM SINGH YADAV in *Organiser*

• *It is wholly needless. Why all this* tamasha *about Ayodhya?* ■ DEVI LAL in *The Times of India*

• *If a particular community insists that the mosque should not be demolished then they should honourably shift it.* ■ MAHANT AVAIDYANATH, president of Ram Janmabhoomi Mukti Yagna Samiti

• *Telling the truth is behaving like an opposition leader.* ■ BHANU PRATAP SINGH, Governor of Karnataka, in *The Week*

• *Implementation of the Mandal report has struck a sympathetic chord in South Africa.* ■ NELSON MANDELA in New Delhi

• *It is not my intention to interfere in the internal affairs of the country. I have complete confidence in the leaders of India to be able to settle their problems without interference from outside.* ■ NELSON MANDELA in a clarification the next day

• *V.P. Singh is willing to divide India in a manner that even the British could not do.* ■ RAJIV GANDHI in *Blitz*

• *When we are prepared to accept reservation of places for animals, some of us do not accept reservation of seats for men.* ■ M. KARUNANIDHI, inaugurating Wildlife Week, in *The Hindu*

• *V.P. Singh is the first person after Lord Buddha and Mahavir to do something for the poor and downtrodden.* ■ LALOO PRASAD YADAV in *Sunday*

• *Reunification of the Left is like a red rag to the* CPI(M). ■ M. FAROOQI, CPI leader, in *The Sunday Observer*

• *We have never lacked talent, though we may have lacked the motivation to win.* ■ MADHAVRAO SCINDIA, president of the Cricket Board, in *The Hindustan Times*

• *By keeping myself persistently single I have converted myself into a permanent public temptation.* ■ MEENAKSHI SESHADRI in *Stardust*

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RIGHT TRACK

Cartoons by JAYANTO



■ The condition of the roads in the country has worsened to such a degree that now it appears even the blind can't ignore them. Recently in the city of potholes, Bombay, matters finally came to a head.

Tired of groping their way around an endless obstacle course, the Blind Graduates Forum of India gathered at the suburb of Sion and decided to sort out matters themselves.

The forum issued a press release stating its intention of refilling a particularly rocky stretch of the street, and invited the public to join hands with it.

Within the short span of an hour this enthusiastic group of volunteers had levelled out the proposed length of road.

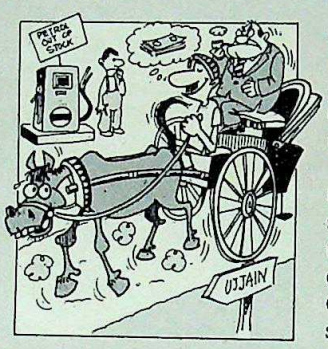
However, that doesn't mean their woes are over. Far from it, in fact. Characteristically, the municipal authorities heartlessly continue to turn a blind eye to the forum's attention-seeking act.

ON A HIGH HORSE

■ Horse power is back and here to stay—or so it seems. And it has been ushered in by the latest hike in the price of petrol.

The 25 per cent increase has hit every strata of society. But worst affected is the common man who is no longer even able to afford an autorickshaw. A search for an alternative mode of conveyance is on. However for the *tongawallahs* of Ujjain that is good news indeed.

Earlier the *tonga* was disdained as an outmoded vehicle, and their drivers were barely able to eke out a living. Suddenly this impoverished group finds itself in popular demand. Now, they



are a sight for sore eyes.

So while an air of gloom pervades the fuel thirsty country, the *tongas* are trotting on a new high.

And since it is apparent that the ongoing petrol crisis is a long-term problem, the *tongawallahs* can safely expect a boom in business. Good horse sense makes sense after all.

MINTING MONEY



■ Old is gold. And living by this adage, an enterprising trio in the capital early last fortnight, struck it rich.

These creative gentlemen in a bid to cash in on the popularity of the serial *The Sword of Tipu Sultan* began minting coins of that era.

Then these fake coins were sold at exorbitant rates to unsuspecting antique collectors. Their most regular customers were unsuspecting foreigners who were eager to possess coins of the times of the East India Company and Tipu Sultan.

Operating essentially in east Delhi, these businessmen were even exporting their newly-made ancient coins. It takes money to make money and they were definitely minting it.

However money has the bad habit of talking and soon the police heard of modernity masquerading as antiquity. Caught red handed, the crooked trio were hauled off to prison and now they cannot even launder their own clothes.

BEGGING NEED

■ Beggars can't be choosers they say, but then neither it seems can the police in Panjim, Goa.

Recently, the top-brass in the police department decided to go on a cleaning-up spree. And the first step towards beautifying their city, they declared, was the banishing of all beggars from the streets. Consequently, with great flourish a memorandum to this effect was issued to the lower rungs of the department.

What the police brass had failed to realise was that their order would be difficult to execute, owing to the



scarcity of beggars in this picturesque haven.

The constables are now at their wits' end trying to fulfil their required quotas. In sheer desperation, they are even considering offering cash incentives to anyone who can provide the department with its quota of beggars for the day.

MOVING TALE

■ Law enforcers often have their hands forced on issues. The policemen of Tisa in Himachal Pradesh recently learnt as much.

The unsuspecting policemen were taken unawares when, late one evening, they found themselves surrounded by army jawans, armed to the hilt and clothed in battle fatigues. The helpless policemen were forcibly marched off to their homes.

The villain was an IAS officer who nursed a personal grouse against the police as they had refused to implement his illegal orders.

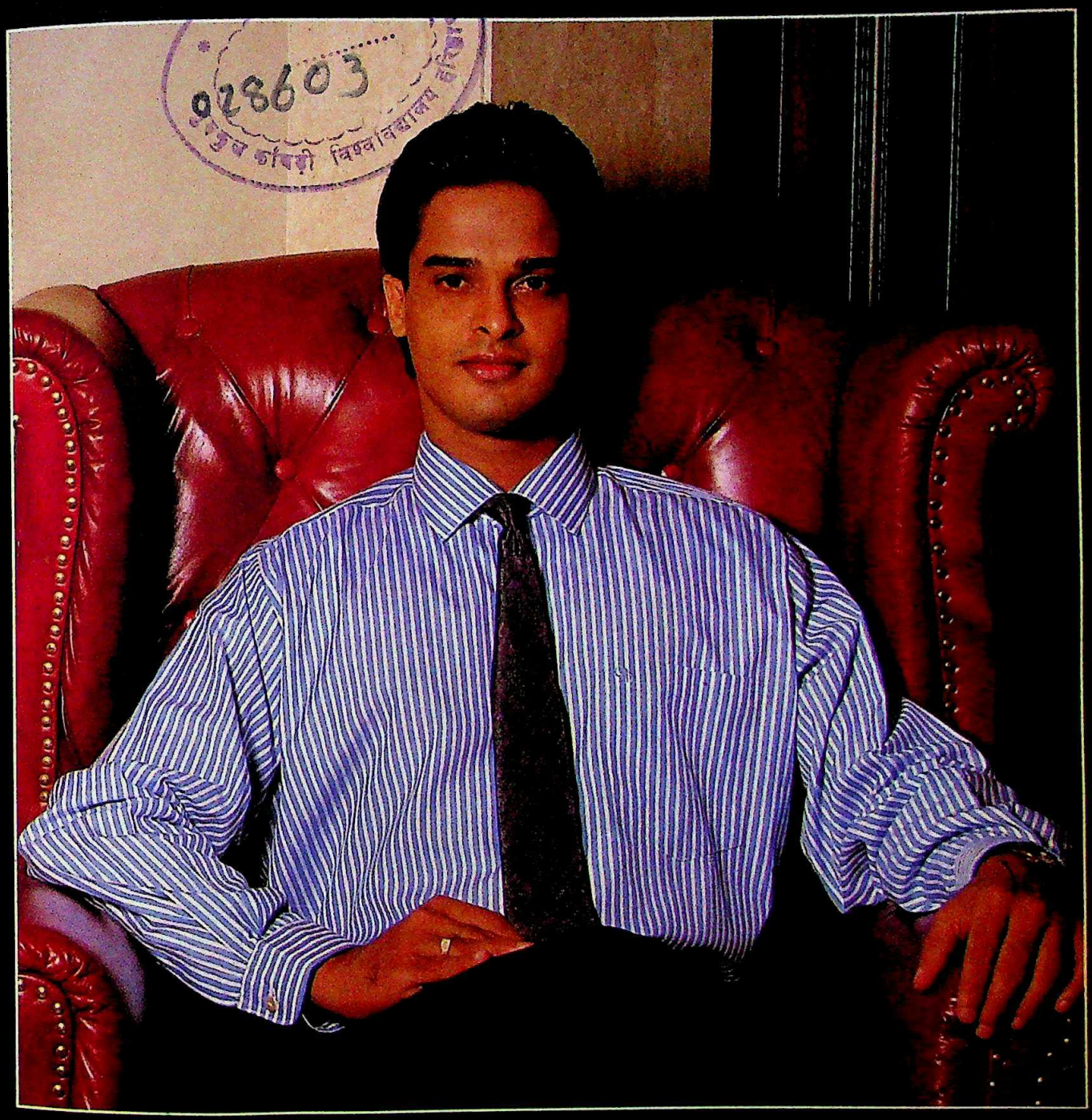
The piqued official then requisitioned the army to take revenge.

The policemen, not taking the matter sitting down, have threatened to strike unless action is taken against the ruthless evicter. He, on the other hand waits in terror for the next eviction—his removal from his job.

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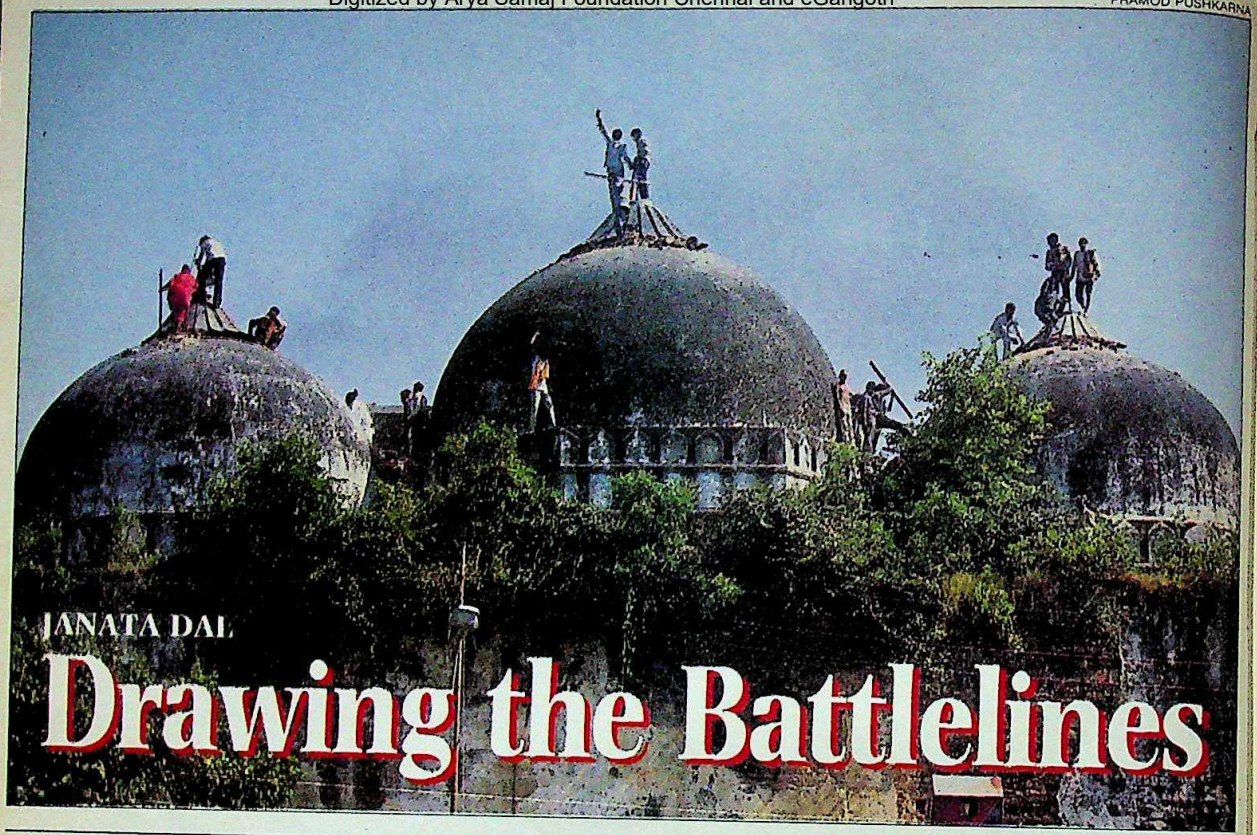
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Drawing the Battlelines

By PRABHU CHAWLA with DILIP AWASTHI in Ayodhya

ON a smaller scale it was a frightening historical replay of the fanaticism of the medieval Christian crusades to liberate Jerusalem from the Muslims. Only this time, October 30, the day of Armageddon in Ayodhya dictated by the militant leadership of the fundamentalist VHP, at stake was a decrepit old mosque—the disputed Babri Masjid—whose sanctity Prime Minister Vishwanath Pratap Singh had vowed to protect in the cause of upholding secularism. Even at the cost, he said, of risking his own political survival.

When the denouement came, leaving 12 dead and thousands injured, including VHP chief Ashok Singhal who suffered a lathi injury on his head, it left the nation reeling under a fresh catharsis. The security apparatus—18,000 paramilitary troops in Ayodhya, and 265,000 in the state—and the authority of civilian administration were swept aside under tidal waves of tens of thousands of maniacal kar sewaks who broke into the protected area amid hysterical cries of "*Jai Siya Ram*" and "*Bachcha bachcha Ram ka*" and planted victory flags on the dome of the masjid.

Kar sewaks atop the shrine: superficial damage

The police retaliated with lathi charges, rubber bullets, tear gas. Then in a near-revolt, the security forces refused to take orders to stop the crowds. The breach was complete. Around 500 stormed into the area and demolished

SCENARIOS

The arithmetic of the House makes it clear that no party can command a majority unless it compromises with declared positions. Elections are inevitable. The question is when, and who will be the caretaker prime minister. Here are the plausible scenarios:
TOTAL 524; Congress(I): 195; Janata Dal: 140; BJP: 86; CPI(M): 33; CPI: 12; Others: 58

1. Leads and Loses: V.P. Singh retains Janata Dal leadership, but loses in House. President fails to find stable alternative. Dissolves House, announces polls, appoints incumbent as caretaker prime minister.	✓✓
2. Split and Support: Janata Dal splits—most likely prompted by Chandra Shekhar—to support Congress(I). (With at least 53 MPs: to avoid disqualification and ensure Congress(I) majority.) Rajiv becomes prime minister. Recommends dissolution, and decides poll date. Ends up as caretaker.	✓
3. Faction and Support: Alternative leader emerges in Janata Dal, which requires a minimum of 75 MPs to go against V.P. Singh. Congress(I) supports from outside a Janata Dal government and dictates its terms.	✓
4. Left Ditch: Left transfers support to Congress(I). Rajiv becomes prime minister. Scenario two results.	✗
5. Leads and Wins: Congress(I) splits or BJP supports Janata Dal. Singh stays prime minister. Decides poll time.	✗

Likely ✓✓ Possible ✓ Unlikely ✗

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portions of the mosque, thus marking a perverse, even iconoclastic beginning of the kar sewa.

Even though the throngs have now been herded out of the disputed area, the mobs have dug in in Ayodhya and the VHP has pledged to continue the kar sewa. The Government finds itself in a crisis of near unmanageable dimensions, the dreadful fall-out of which will affect not just the political leadership of the country but the very well-being and stability of the nation.

THE failure of the forces to prevent the kar sewa was devastating proof that guns and force simply cannot solve the Babri Masjid-Ram Janmabhoomi dispute. In fact the Home Ministry has sent a clear message to the Cabinet that paramilitary forces can no longer be relied on to stop the militant Hindu movement. And the army has signalled its unwillingness to step in and take drastic action.

This leaves the Government with no other option but to start anew the process of negotiations for a lasting solution. Within the Janata Dal, this development has given a new boost to the dissidents who have intensified their efforts to replace V.P. Singh.

Singh, characteristically, is fighting back with his ever-ready resignation threat. Responding to the daily demands for his ouster, he wrote to party President S.R. Bommai that he would resign in the interests of saving the country from "communal flames" and to uphold the rights of the backward castes. This was again a strategy to put his opponents on the defensive.

By taking an uncompromising stand on the masjid-mandir issue, Singh has been trying to score a pre-emptive and strategic strike over his political foes. The thrust is to label anybody who opposes him or tries to attack him as an opponent of social justice and communal harmony and secularism. These days when Singh addresses party workers and MPs he reminds them that the party fought the last election for *"satta badlav"* (change of government), and this time it is going to fight for *"vyavastha badlav"* (change of the social system). The tack is clear: to try and convert the Mandal report and his firm stand on Ayodhya to his electoral advantage. When the BJP suddenly withdrew support from his government, he had been struck by paralysis. Beleaguered, he had shuffled his cards to find a possible winner. And then typically, he managed to combine retreat with resurgence to seize the opening offered by

THE PRESIDENT

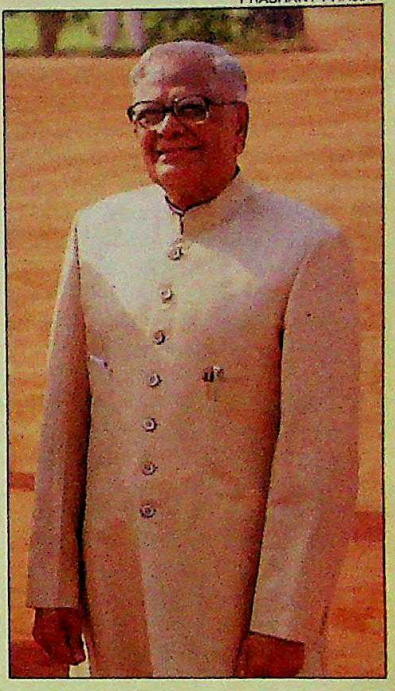
Several Options

"ARTICLE 74 (1): There shall be a Council of Ministers with the Prime Minister at the head to aid and advice the President who shall, in the exercise of his functions, act in accordance with such advice:

Article 75 (1): The Prime Minister shall be appointed by the President...

(3): The Council of Ministers shall be collectively responsible to the House of the People." —Constitution of India

PRASHANT PANJIAR



Venkataraman: decisive moment

LIKE N. Sanjeeva Reddy 11 years ago, R. Venkataraman, finds himself in the midst of a historic drama. As N.A. Palkhivala says, the President is more powerful at the time of a crisis like this as the Constitution is "wisely ambiguous".

Could the President have dismissed V.P. Singh?

The convention is that a leader who is sure of a majority support is given the chance to prove it in Parliament. President Venkataraman had said in 1987 (INDIA TODAY, July 31): "The President must direct the prime minister to summon the House and seek a vote of confidence. The prime minister's position can only be tested in the House."

Is a defeated prime minister's advice binding?

On this basic issue experts differ. Legal luminary Ram Jethmalani says: "Under the 42nd Amendment to Article 74, the President is not only bound by convention but by law. It will be a gross misuse of power if the President invited the Congress(I) against the advice of the prime minister." But former attorney-general K. Parasaran feels that: "Once the prime minister loses his majority, who is he to advise the President?"

In 1970, when Indira Gandhi lost her majority in the Parliament following a split in the Congress party, she advised President V.V. Giri to announce mid-term polls. The President complied. In 1979, Sanjeeva Reddy dissolved the House on the advice of Charan Singh, who had not even proved his majority.

In case the incumbent loses, can the President call on the leader of the largest party to form a government?

Noted constitutional expert K.K. Venugopal feels: "It is the duty of the President to ask the single-largest party's leader to form a government."

The President can invite the Congress(I) if he feels it can form a stable government. If the Congress(I) is unable to form a government, advises the President to dissolve the Lok Sabha, he may not accept it. The guiding principle, say experts, will be: should a minority government be replaced by an unstable one.

Law Minister Dinesh Goswami points out that the President would be justified in ignoring a request from any new leader of the National Front as what matters is "the parties not the individuals".

Who becomes the caretaker prime minister if no party is able to form a government?

The last leader to face a vote of confidence. If V.P. Singh fails to prove his majority and Rajiv Gandhi is invited to prove his majority, there are two scenarios:

► If Rajiv Gandhi declines to form a government, V.P. Singh will continue as caretaker prime minister.

► If Rajiv forms a government and then loses on the floor of the House he will be the caretaker prime minister.

—W.P.S. SIDHU

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the BJP's withdrawal in order to launch a massive political offensive.

The lynchpin of his campaign became his declaration that he would "sacrifice his prime ministership to preserve India's secularism". His rhetoric had a basis in shrewd strategy. Singh felt that the BJP had indulged in political adventurism and would suffer in the end. He reckoned since an overwhelming 52 of the BJP's 86 Lok Sabha seats had come from the three states of Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan, there was little it could gain there. On the other hand, the Janata Dal stood to gain in Uttar Pradesh due to the caste and communal polarisation—it could push up its tally from 54 to 65. In Bihar too it was likely to fare better.

THERE was also the question of quelling dissidence within the party. To cement his leadership, Singh conscientiously involved Biju Patnaik, Chimanbhai Patel, Mulayam Singh Yadav, Devi Lal and Ajit Singh in evolving the strategy against the BJP. The last two he brought around by pointing out that together they were capable of sweeping any election in the north. Once again he was attempting to forge a powerful alliance along caste lines—Jats, backwards and Muslims.

Even after Ayodhya was breached, V.P. Singh had not shed his complacence. He knows his prime opponent, Chandra Shekhar, cannot alone muster enough support and must be joined by Ajit Singh—so far a fence-sitter—Mulayam Singh Yadav and Chimanbhai Patel. In addition, Singh calculates that any new leader would have to bank on the support of either the BJP or the Congress(I) to retain power—a scenario which will make the new leader ineffective in dealing with the situation.

But the events of October 30 have provided ammunition to his enemies to counter this strategy. The most compelling need of the hour is to drastically lower communal temperatures by reviving a vigorous process of negotiations. Singh's opponents may have been boxed into a corner over replacing him for fear of being called anti-secular. But now they have a new line—that the party must have a leader with whom the VHP and BJP can negotiate to save the Government. His opponents may now proffer the excuse that Singh's penultimate hardlining on the Ayodhya issue makes him totally unacceptable as a negotiator.

For though Singh may have had perfectly valid reasons for precipitously rescinding the October 20 ordinance

V.P. SINGH

"BJP has betrayed the people's confidence"

PRIME Minister V.P. Singh doesn't look like a man who is about to lose his job. He is relaxed, confident and full of verve. Singh is clearly in election mode. Every nerve in his highly-politicised being appears to be tingling. The alacrity with which he has latched on to the Ayodhya issue seems to have washed away the vacillations of the past 10 months. He's got his ideal mix: political expediency cloaked in high principle. When Editor AROON PURIE *spoke to him, he was aggressive and unrepentant but as always chose his words with deliberate care. Excerpts:*

Q. What did you mean when you said you could prove your majority?

A. What I meant was I will face Parliament. The issue was that of the country's unity. Also its secular credentials, the Constitution, the judiciary and the democratic institutions have to be maintained. Since we had to choose between saving the Government and saving these principles, we made a clear choice that we would save these principles and the Government may go. So we have sacrificed a whole government for these issues.

Q. Why didn't you resign?

A. When the BJP withdrew support, there was a meeting of the Janata Dal and the National Front to decide as to what should be done. I was instructed by the leadership and the president not to resign because this issue had to be placed before Parliament. So the point is not so much of proving the majority as of placing the issue before the highest forum of the country.

Q. Even though the vote of confidence is just one line?

A. One line, but everyone knows how it has been brought about by another single-line statement—of the BJP. That if you stop the Rath Yatra, we will withdraw support. The aim now is that everyone should register themselves on this issue.

Q. Did you make a deal with the BJP as claimed by Vajpayee that the Rath Yatra will not be stopped?

A. If there were a deal, how has the Government collapsed? It would have been saved. The fact that we have sacrificed the Government is proof that there was no deal. The point was that if they accepted that the land is disputed and agreed to abide by the court verdict, the kar sewa could start on the undisputed area. Then the problem would be resolved. Then everyone can go, the Rath Yatra can go, we can go, and the Muslims will also join in. In fact, there is a proposal to build a *stambha*, a column, in the memory of Ram and the Muslims said they will also join in.

Q. Has there been any discussion on this issue with the BJP?

A. The discussion was that you honour the court order and after that everything is easy. In that case, the Rath Yatra is not a problem. But the Rath Yatra with a view to violating the court order, that's not possible, we can't accept it.

Q. Were you surprised with the BJP stand on this in the final days?

A. Yes, because we were never given any such indication. We are accused of not consulting them on Mandal, even though they had it in their manifesto with some variation. However, we did inform them before making the announcement. But in so far as they were involved with the Government, we were entitled to, if not consultation, at least prior information. And in that sense, the understanding with the electorate was that we will work.

Despite our differences, we would complete five years together. Changing the stance in between, linking their support to a religion was a totally new element.

Q. Why do you think they put up this condition?

A. It is an election strategy. Because the BJP's stand had been that it was a movement of the VHP and you should talk to the VHP. During the elections and even in government when I asked for more time, I always asked them to use their good offices. But they said it is the VHP's movement, not ours.

Suddenly, they decided to start the Rath Yatra, identifying themselves

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BHAWAN SINGH



with the movement. If it is only for Ram, and if your faith is above everything—above the Government and the Constitution—then it should also be above your party. Then why was your party symbol on the Rath?

Q. *Isn't your inability to find a solution an indication of your leadership's failure?*

A. No, it is not. It is the failure of the BJP leadership. They brought in an element which never was there. That the support to the National Front will be linked to the Rath Yatra. The BJP has betrayed the confidence of the people.

Q. *Were you nearing a solution with the ordinance?*

A. No, even before the ordinance, I had some good solutions before me. I know why they weren't accepted. However, since this is such a big issue we should continue our efforts.

Q. *Was the VHP nearing an agreement when you succumbed to the pressures of some Muslim leaders?*

A. No, it was a section of the BJP that took the ordinance as a fait accompli and felt that it might be accepted. But it was opposed by the VHP. A senior RSS leader opposed it. The *pujaris* went on strike. And I couldn't afford the *pujaris* going on strike. So there was no point in thrusting another controversy on both sides. The most sensible thing was to revoke the ordinance.

Q. *Was the mandir issue raised as a counter move to Mandal which is regarded as an election ploy?*

A. No, it is not an election ploy. It was in our manifesto. But the BJP did not say in its manifesto that it would build the temple. They changed their stance. If the BJP and VHP say that they are ready to accept, commit themselves to, the court verdict on the Ram Janmabhoomi-Babri Masjid issue, I am ready to offer my head.

> "In upholding principles, I am not a disaster. In following a principle, one has to go on a dangerous path."

Q. *What about the fact that the implementation of the Mandal report was announced just two days before Devi Lal's rally?*

A. I had given an assurance in the last session that before the next session we would implement it. And every leader had announced—even before getting the votes—that within a year of our coming to power we would do it. Also, the MPs raised this point whenever the party met. Then on August 6 when we met they said you must announce it. And before doing it, I called the National Front meeting only for this issue and it endorsed the move.

Q. *Are you saying there was no link between what Devi Lal was doing to mobilise support and this?*

A. No, there was no link.

Q. *What do you feel will be the main issue in the elections? Will it be the stability of the Government?*

A. The main issue will be the unity of the country. And, more than the Government, what sort of country do you want? Do you want an India of love or an India of hatred? The cause is much bigger than the Government. So the election will be on a bigger issue.

Q. *All other parties will make stability of the Government an issue. What will be your answer to that?*

A. Stability is one thing. The Congress had stability for so many years. But what did stability alone give? The last government was thrown away despite stability. The other issue would be justice. Justice to the economically and socially backward classes.

Q. *Given the polarisation taking place, is it possible for the Congress(I) and the Janata Dal to come together?*

A. This is a new trend that the BJP has taken. I have already said that the secular forces should come together where the polarisation is neither on caste nor religion.

Q. *Do you see some kind of an electoral understanding between the Congress(I) and the Janata Dal?*

A. I can't say it for the present. But I don't rule it out in the future.

Q. *You are often regarded as weak-kneed and a compromiser. Will you compromise again to retain the prime ministership?*

A. No. Are you saying a person who has given up the chief ministership, the finance ministership, defence ministership, and now the prime ministership has compromised? I don't compromise on principles. They chose the wrong person. They thought they could make me compromise by threats. They were wrong.

Q. *You said you would be a disaster as prime minister. Have you fulfilled that promise too?*

A. No, it has been disastrous to the prime minister's post.

Q. *Have you been a disaster as an individual?*

A. I am not a disaster. In upholding principles, I am not a disaster. In following a principle, one has to go on a dangerous path.

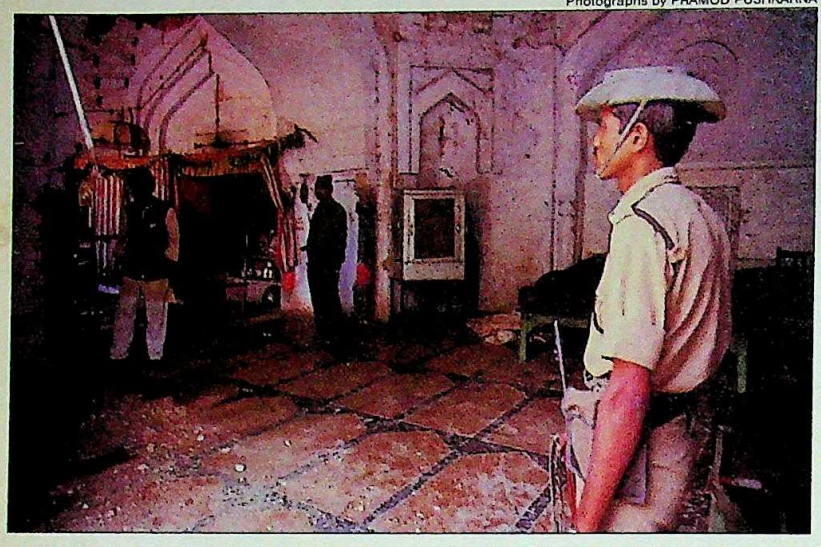
Q. *Not a disastrous path?*

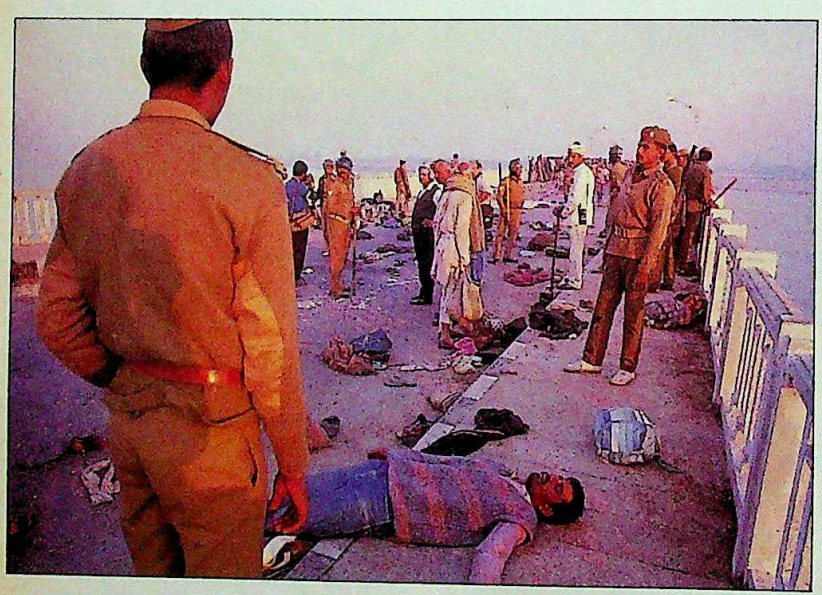
A. Not a disastrous path, it is the correct path. Any other path would have been disastrous for the country. Yielding at this point would have been disastrous. That disaster I have saved.

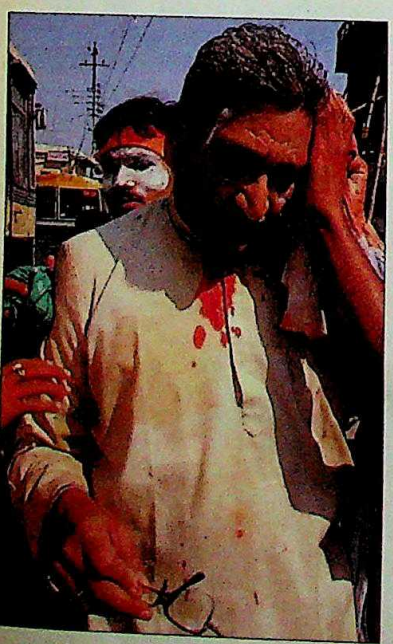
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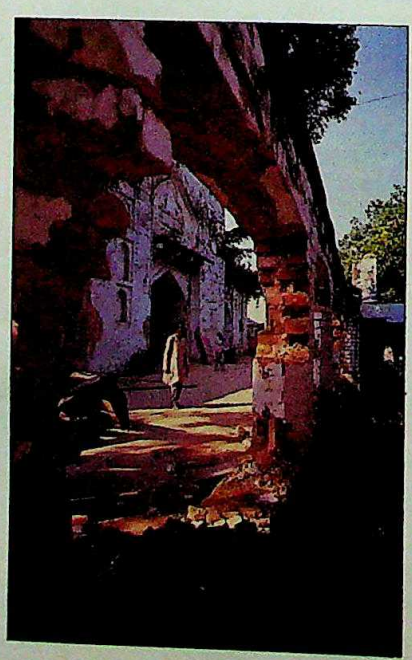
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Photographs by PRAMOD PUSHKARNA









(Clockwise from top) Undamaged sanctum; Saryu bridge after police firing; the breached boundary wall; and injured Singhal: militant frenzy

which was part of the compromise package being negotiated to persuade the BJP to dilute its agitation, his opponents will argue that this was a cynical attempt to harden his own support among the Muslims. And because the ordinance was promulgated after prolonged discussions with the VHP, BJP and RSS, Singh's enemies will reason that since these organisations view him as a man who cannot be trusted, another leader should be chosen to revive the peace process and moderate the challenges of religious fundamentalism.

On the flip side, will the Muslims continue to support him after the Ayodhya kar sewa? If the opinion of Muslim conservative leaders is any indication, minority support for the prime minister and Uttar Pradesh chief minister is now cast in stone. They profess that by administrative resolve and by preventing the demolition of the Babri Masjid, Singh and Yadav have honoured the commitment that they would enforce the law of the land.

But there are other Muslim leaders who feel that the BJP-VHP combine has scored a symbolic victory that has shaken the confidence of the community in the state machinery and that this has led to greater insecurity. Many of them also believe that Yadav, with the backing of Singh, raised the temperature of confrontation so high with the mass arrests of suspected kar sewaks, as well as his anti-mandir rallies—that began way before Advani launched his Rath Yatra—in the quest of solidifying their electoral support, that he did them a disservice by further galvanising Hindu communalism.

Above all, what the last 10 months have established is that V.P. Singh is intrinsically—in fact, to the very core of his being—a political animal. He is perhaps the real inheritor of Indira Gandhi's legacy, with the same legendary ability to manipulate enemies against one another and couch every kind of action in convincing populist rhetoric. But this time the web of calculations he has woven is truly befuddling. Will his calculations work? Having survived from crisis to crisis through questionable means, Singh's credibility skates on the thinnest of ice. One more dubious backroom deal, one more egregious machination, and the ice may crack, turning his last ditch battle into his Waterloo.

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V.P. SINGH

Fall of a Prime Minister

By INDERJIT BADHWAR

HE inherited one of the most difficult jobs in the world: running India with a minority government hanging in an impossible balance between the Left and the BJP. It called for extraordinary political skills.

Vishwanath Pratap Singh was the man of the moment. He was the vanquisher of Rajiv Gandhi's government which had degenerated from promise to putrefaction within three years.

Singh chose for himself an apposite title—a manager of contradictions acceptable to a vast cross section of society. But the manager slid from management to compromise to confusion to petty sectional politicking in record time.

Today as a vast section of the intelligentsia, the middle class, professionals, students, urbanites and even rural folk have turned against him, Singh is scatologically vilified in bumper stickers, slogans and graffiti that make the "Rajiv Gandhi *chor hai*" slogan sound, in comparison, like the chant of an innocent choir-boy.

He was initially able to manage the contradictions between the Left and BJP even though it meant paying the heavy price of ducking the real challenges of national policy whether in Punjab or Kashmir. In fact, the Left and the Right had given him a carte blanche to deal firmly with the factionalism in his own party and to count on their continuous support from outside.

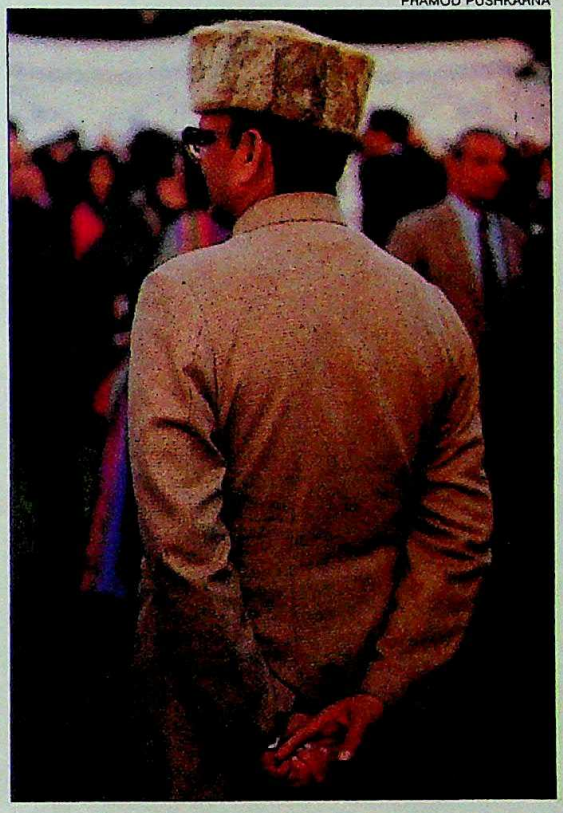
This is where he failed, unable to deal with the challenges posed by Devi Lal and Chandra Shekhar. And in the process of making one compromise after another, Singh found himself being sucked inexorably into the cesspool of the sectional politics of his own party and unable to rise above them. Devi Lal and Haryana seemed to have become larger in Singh's mind than the rest of the nation.

And there was a reason for this. The day—and more important the way—Singh was chosen prime minister by his party marked the beginning of the decline of Singh's image that had hitherto been his most powerful political weapon and source of public support. He was chosen prime minister through a last-minute backroom conspiracy with Devi Lal against Chandra Shekhar.

He had repeatedly said he'd never accept even the office of prime minister. But he achieved that office as co-conspirator. This gave a credible stance, a moral edge, to his critics to label the Raja a hypocrite who was not as principled as he liked others to believe.

The fall started with the massive rigging during the Meham byelection on February 27, the repolling amid widespread violence that led to the countermanding of the election. The party, but more importantly, the country stood behind Singh in demanding the dismissal of Devi Lal's son, Om Prakash Chautala. But Singh made a miserable compromise. In order to save his son, Devi Lal threatened to resign on March 11 but Singh pleaded with him not to and allowed Chautala to continue as chief minister until May when Banarasi Das Gupta was elected.

PRAMOD PUSHKARNA



But that was only the beginning of the sordid tale. In June, Chautala won another assembly election from Darba Kalan. On July 12, after reports of a secret deal between Singh and Devi Lal, Chautala was sworn in again as chief minister and havoc broke loose in the party. Several ministers resigned to force Singh into abiding by the ethics he had always professed.

There was a brief period, of perhaps a week, after he sacked Devi Lal, when opportunity knocked again. The public was behind Singh and the hope was that now that he had shown the door to trouble-makers in his party, he would get on with the business of governance.

It was the break he could have cashed in on. But he blew it. On August 7, a day before Devi Lal's rally in the capital, Singh exploded the Mandal bomb. The dubious timing was such that even those who believed in the rightness of the decision, cast aspersions on his motives—that it was a vote bank ploy intended to finish Devi Lal.

In the days before the announcement of the Mandal reservations, the Cabinet arguments that had most impressed him were about which caste factor would cancel out the other and how a consolidation of backward castes would make his seat unassailable for the next 20 years. Arguments that the process of national integration would suffer a set-back were brushed aside.

Again, his own supporters had begun to question his convictions. Was his playing messiah of the backward castes just another role? While he was chief minister in Uttar Pradesh and later as a prominent Congress(I) leader he played the Brahmin-Thakur-Harijan-Muslim

THREE PHASES OF V.P. SINGH

THE VICTOR: Eleven months ago he was the new national alternative.

THE COMPROMISER: In placating the Left and BJP he failed to tackle national issues.

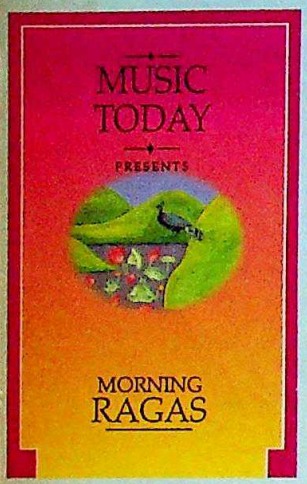
THE SECTARIAN: He exploited caste and communal politics for his own vote bank.

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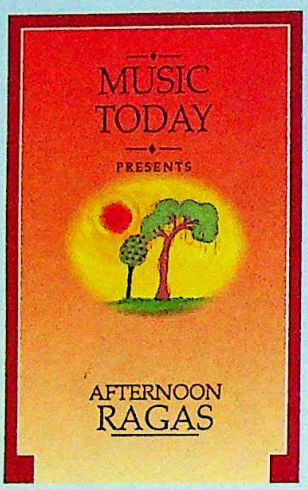


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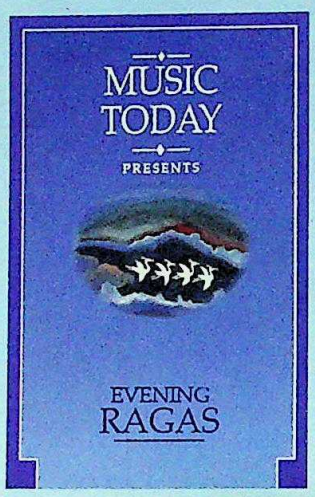


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MADHUVANTI: *Hariprasad Chaurasia:* Flute
PILU: *Amjad Ali Khan:* Sarod

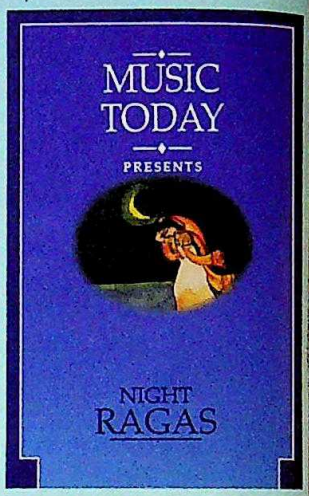


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vote bank. After his break with the Congress(I) his reliance on the Jan Morcha leaders—Arun Nehru, Satyapal Malik, Arif Mohammed Khan, Ram Dhan—represented the same caste combination. Then began his infamous flirtation with the Jat leadership. When that romance was over he began a new one with the Yadavs and redoubled his efforts to solidify his Muslim vote bank relying on conservative leaders like Imam Bukhari and Azam Khan.

Power, not principle, now seemed to be the dominant motive. He had showed this side of himself during his Allahabad election in 1987 when he refused to allow his closest lieutenant Arif Mohammed Khan to campaign for him for fear of upsetting fundamentalist Muslim leadership for whom Arif is anathema for his opposition to the Muslim Women's Bill.

And when convenient, Singh also played a Hindu card. Towards the end of his election campaign last November he promised to go to Ayodhya to oppose the brick consecration ceremony on November 9, but backed off without explanation when he was advised that this would provoke Hindu sentiments against him.

These same attributes were to haunt him to the very end. After 10 months of masterly inactivity on the Babri Masjid issue, and only after L.K. Advani began his Rath Yatra did Singh respond to the need of attempting to solve the issue. After negotiations with the BJP and VHP he sought emergency approval by the Cabinet of a compromise package under which the disputed area in Ayodhya would be taken over by the Centre and the BJP would agree to moderate its Ram agitation. Singh even awoke the President at midnight for his signature and an ordinance was issued on October 20. But within 48 hours, under pressure from conservative Muslim leaders, he withdrew it and decided to confront the BJP head-on. The BJP hardened its stand and Advani was arrested on October 23.

PRAMOD PUSHKARNA



Singh's visit to Punjab last December characterised the euphoria which turned out to be short-lived.

LATER, Singh went on television with a lachrymose appeal to the nation to back him in his fight for secular principles. An angry Muslim member of the Cabinet was to tell him: "You cannot have it both ways. Today, because you have bowed before fundamentalist Muslim leaders like Bukhari and Azam Khan, tomorrow you will have to lick the feet of Hindu fundamentalists like Ashok Singhal and Bahurao Deoras."

But even with the impending collapse of his government, V.P. Singh, the consummate player of politics, was trying to snatch victory out of the jaws of defeat, to turn an immediate disadvantage into a long-term advantage. At least he now had a slogan with which to confront the public: he could have taken the easy way out on both Mandal and mandir but he had preferred to take a principled stand for secularism and the backward castes even if it entailed his Government's downfall. His strategy is to derive maximum political mileage out of blunders and failed compromises by turning them into votes.

But these calculations may not cancel a big negative factor that may work against him—the loss of his image and his credibility. Deep inside he may have believed in the rightness of his decision. But what shocked even many of his colleagues who'd backed him on the Mandal issue was the absence of public display of any human reaction by him to the student protests and the spate of suicides and self-immolations. According to many sources, his Jan Morcha colleague and minister of state for parliamentary affairs Satyapal Malik excoriated Singh at a cabinet meeting on October 27 saying: "You have been misled and have left a legacy of divisiveness for which we may not be forgiven."

Said a Jan Morcha colleague of his: "We told him, you're the product of national issues not sectional concerns. You are the leader of all of India. But he seemed to forget this." Perhaps the country judged him wrong, taking a sectional politician and giving him the mantle of a national leader. Perhaps the task proved too much for him. A great nation and little minds go ill together.

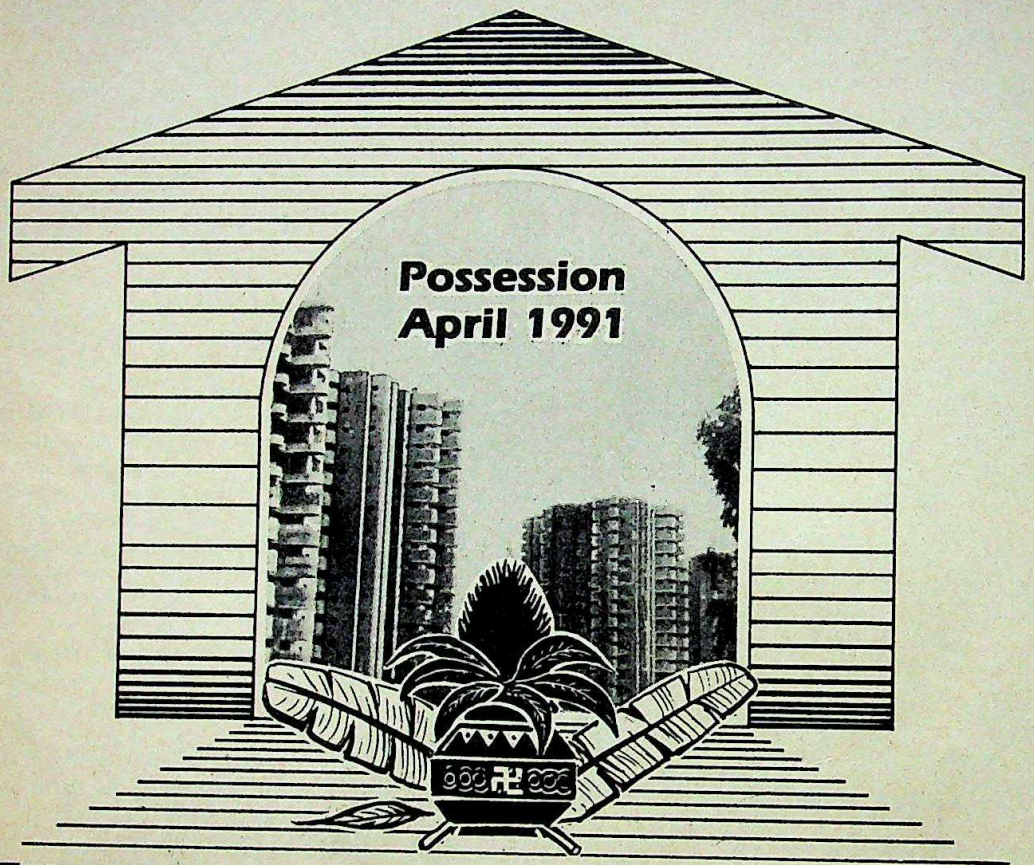
To the credit of Singh, office didn't corrupt him. He retained his clean image, pushing no lobbies. He depoliticised judicial appointments, opened up his government, and struck a blow for civil rights by repealing the insidious 64th Amendment for Punjab. But office showed him up for what he was—not yet a leader.

The country faces some clear choices again. Regional, casteist and sectarian forces began to dominate the national scene as they'd never done before. Religious rath yatras, regional political battles, caste-based leadership squabbles that were fought on a smaller scale and at the state level now occupy the nation's centre stage. What remains to be seen in the next elections is whether an electorate that has been so intensely affected by these developments will vote in a manner that will further exacerbate these tendencies or choose to push the pendulum back and usher in a new climate in which the current divisiveness gives way to a climate of unity and stability.

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BHARATIYA JANATA PARTY

An Election Gamble

By PANKAJ PACHAURI

WHEN the 10-month-old BJP-Janata Dal alliance of convenience floundered it showed that politics also makes strangers out of bedfellows. And the country wondered, not at the bloody break between the two, but at how they'd managed to play political footsie for this long.

Not that the affair had been a harmonious one. The parties had tried to backstab each other whenever possible. As K.R. Malkani, BJP ideologue put it: "How long could we have carried this cross? This man was hurting us in every part. We were supporting a government which was writing our epitaph." Ayodhya, the BJP decided would mark their first-ditch stand.

The earlier frictions the BJP had decided to tolerate in the hope of consolidating their strength while supporting the National Front experiment. On Punjab, on Article 370, the party stayed yoked to the Janata Dal spurred on by a common anti-Congressism. This uncomfortable alliance may have lasted a little longer and the BJP could have been brought around to a compromise on the Ayodhya issue, but then Mandal Commission happened suddenly.

The implementation of the Mandal report threw the BJP into a panic. Even though BJP leaders deny this in public, the reality is that the party saw the report as a dire threat to its very existence. The 27 per cent reservations for the backward castes augured to sunder the party's vote banks by dividing the Hindu vote.

One manifestation of this came when angry students gheraoed L.K. Advani and Madan Lal Khurana in Delhi demanding they protest the implementation of the report. The gherao was in a way an ultimatum from the urbanites and the middle class to the BJP to take up the sword for them or perish. That may well have been the point at which Advani decided to wield the Ayodhya sword with ruthless determination. The party also decided to become an 'activist opposition', for in the past opposition parties that had hit the streets to protest had found their efforts translated into votes. The BJP is hoping that the street fighting and going to jail campaigns well before elections are more likely to gain them votes than the yatra itself.

The Rath Yatra's importance in the party's game plan cannot be underestimated. Advani and the BJP reckoned that the one way to override the caste gauntlet flung out by V.P. Singh was to hit back with religion. It was also intended to serve another purpose. The BJP leadership had realised that people vote as much for personalities as for issues, and their one major drawback had always been the absence of a national level leader, something both the Congress and the Left had always possessed. With the yatra the party hoped to present Advani as a national leader. From Somnath to Samastipur, Advani touched 37 parliamentary constituencies and the reception everywhere was rousing. Incidently,

Advanis' Rath Yatra in Delhi: inflammatory rhetoric

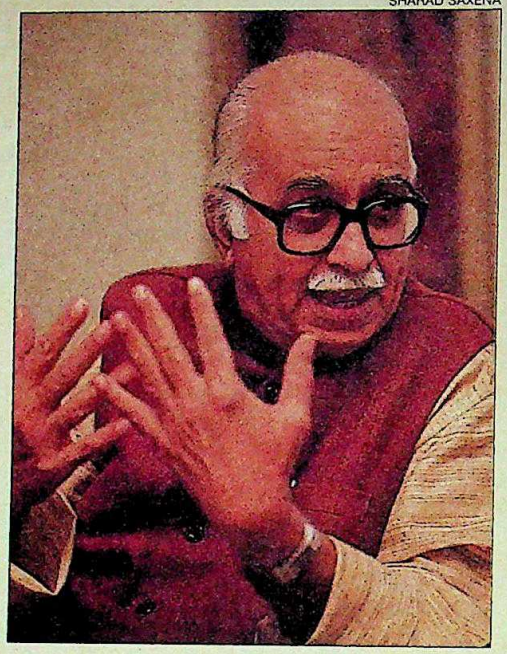
BHAWAN SINGH



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SHARAD SAXENA



L.K. ADVANI

"This government is a liability"

INCARCERATION in a second floor suite of the Canal Rest House on the Massanjore Dam did not cut off L.K. Advani from the rest of the world. He was provided with a portable colour TV, and a 3 km cable was specially laid to make him accessible by telephone. The calls, of course, were cleared by officials. In his first interview since detention, conducted telephonically, Advani spoke to Senior Editor PRABHU CHAWLA, attacking V.P. Singh's Government for its failure on all fronts.

Q. *Are you convinced the withdrawal of support was a wise decision for your party?*

A. I am not only fully convinced but, also firmly believe that association with this government was proving counter-productive for us. The prime minister seemed to have taken us for granted and expected us to support every wrong he did. The Government has become a liability for the country at the moment. Our withdrawal is related to the total failure of the Government on every front and not the mandir issue alone. The national front government's performance has been dismal.

Q. *Hasn't your decision led to political instability in the country?*

A. We are not responsible for the instability. There has always been a question mark on the Janata Dal Government's stability—however, not because of us but due to its own factional politics. There was hardly a day during the last 10 months when there wasn't a dispute over leadership or major policy differences.

Q. *Is there any possibility of patching up with V.P. Singh? Will your party review its decision if he makes any positive move?*

A. How can that happen when we are the targets of police repression? We have some fundamental differences now with this government. Some of these existed even when we decided to support it. But now its manner of governance has made it clear that this government should go.

Q. *Will you support an alternative leader within the Janata Dal?*

A. Vajpayeeji has already answered that question. Our party is for dissolution of the Lok Sabha and a mid-term poll and nothing else.

Q. *Is there a possibility of the BJP voting with the Congress(I) on the vote of no confidence?*

A. We have moved our own motion of no confidence against V.P. Singh's Government. Our objective is to ensure that the House is dissolved so that an early election can take place.

Q. *Hasn't your party been isolated on the question of constructing a temple on the disputed site?*

A. We don't regard it as isolation. National politics has become polarised in such a way that there are two political groupings now. While all non-BJP parties are on one side of the fence, we are on the other. So where is the question of isolation? We have a distinct political indentity now. In fact, our party now respresents the sentiments of the vast majority of the people on the Ram mandir—which is now a national issue. This government seems to be the captive of a few fundamentalists which is why it can withdraw an ordinance under threat from a few individuals.

Q. *Hasn't your move led to more communal violence and the division of the country along religious lines?*

A. Absolutely not. On the contrary, it led to the easing of tension between the two communities. Our Rath Yatra even passed through the Congress(I)-led states and there was no serious incident of communal violence there—either before or after the yatra passed through. Going by the response, I can claim it had the approval of a large section of the minority community as well.

Q. *But it is causing a lot of tension?*

A. The whole issue is being played up by the official media. Doordarshan has almost launched a slander campaign against us by airing the views selectively. The misuse of the official media now is worse than what it was during the Emergency. If there is any tension, it is due to the worst ever police repression and violation of civil rights by the Janata Dal Government in Uttar Pradesh. Over one lakh kar sewaks have been detained just because they wanted to perform kar sewa for the construction of the Ram temple which is a question of their faith.

Q. *Was your Rath Yatra meant to divert attention from the Mandal Commission?*

A. We decided to launch a movement for the construction of the Ram mandir in June itself though a formal announcement was made only in September. The VHP gave enough time to the Government to resolve this issue. The Government never wanted to solve this problem.

Q. *Will you resort to a rath yatra again to achieve your objective which at the moment seems like a distant mirage?*

A. Yes, I would like to take it to its logical end. Construction of the temple in Ayodhya is a matter of national faith and not a political issue. But sitting here in detention, I can't make any definite commitment. We will review it when we are able to resume normal and democratic politics.

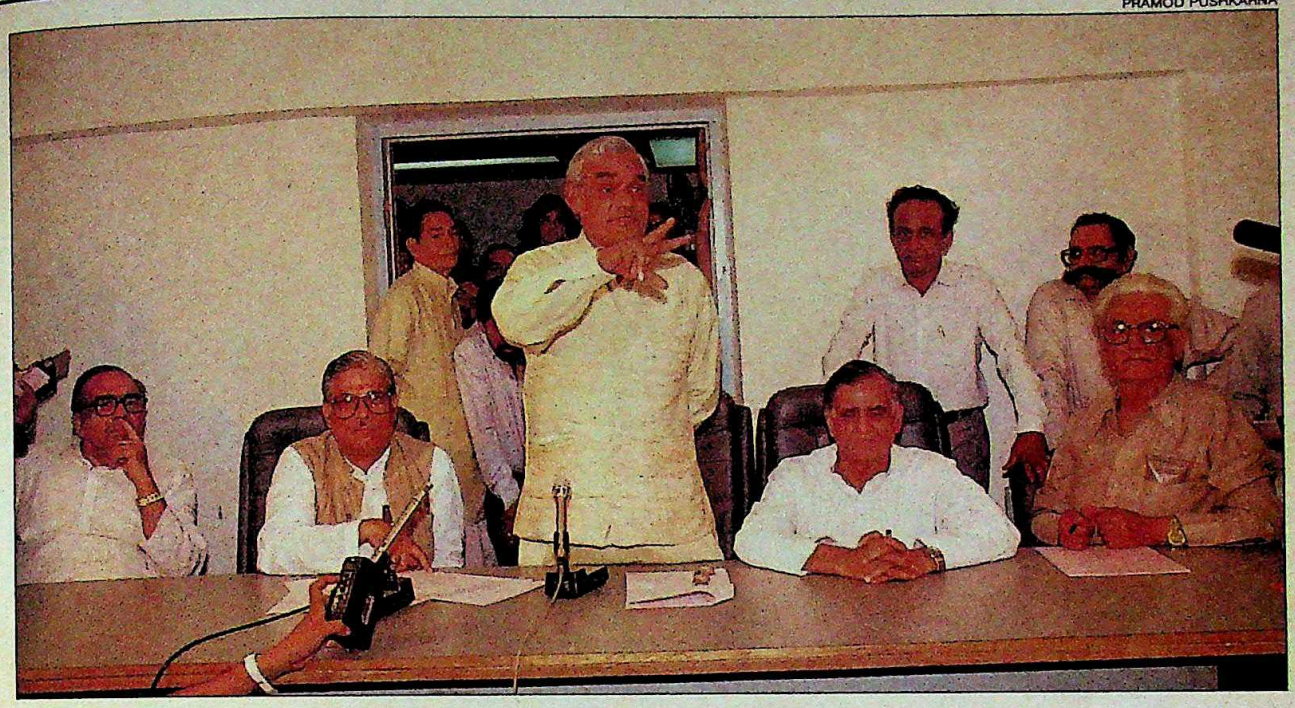
Q. *Do you now regret having extended support to this government?*

A. Our initial reaction was right as the people had voted for a non-Congress(I) government. But this government's behaviour over the last 10 months makes me think we should have examined the question in much more detail.

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PRAMOD PUSHKARNA



Vajpayee with senior BJP leaders: going it alone

nine of these constituencies belonged to the Congress(I), six to the Janata Dal and 16 to the BJP.

In the tumult of the Hindu awakening, the roles of the BJP, the VHP, the RSS, and the blatantly militant Bajrang Dal fell into place. It did not take long for the RSS to realise that taking the Ram baton from the acerbic VHP General Secretary Ashok Singhal and giving it to Advani had been a master stroke. Soon after the Ram caravan started moving, all the other bodies associated with the campaign including the 36 organisations under the RSS came under the spell of Advani. Even moderates like Atal Behari Vajpayee joined the ranks of the kar sewaks. Explained RSS ideologue Gobind Acharya: "Emotionally everyone is attached with this campaign. Intellectually too they will understand it." The strategy was clear: the winning mix would be forged out of the personality and appeal of Advani and the BJP, and the cadres and organisation of the RSS.

Yet the results are debatable. Even Advani doubts if the mix of the Hindu hardline philosophy and politics will translate into votes. "The party leaders should not mistake the unprecedented response during the Rath Yatra as support for the party," he told the rally at Patna. And Vajpayee's, "we are going to sweep the elections," at Delhi seemed to have more than a touch of hyperbole.

BJP's use of religion for political goals is fraught with many dangers. It may lead to a more Hindu-than-thou race among other political parties. The lessons of Punjab and Jammu and Kashmir, where marginal fundamentalist groups forced others to talk in their language, are relevant. When it occurs in the heartland of the country, spearheaded by a mainstream party, it may hit at the very roots of the secular polity.

IRONICALLY the Rath Yatra also brought to the fore a strange subconscious minority complex within the majority community. A feeling that when it comes to dealing with a hopelessly outnumbered community, offense is the best form of defence. This paradox was evident when the rath started on its final phase from Bihar. The minorities seemed to have a sense of magnanimity. A calm prevailed though the rath passed through some communally hyper-sensitive areas like Dhanbad, Ranchi, Hazaribagh, Nawadah, Gaya and Biharsharif. At Nawadah, Mohammad Manzoor Khan, 45, who owns an electric shop on the main road reflected this paradox best when he said: "Why should the rath create fear among the Muslims? They are going to Ayodhya their most sacred place, and plan to build their temple. This should not cause panic." This attitude was all the more admirable considering it came amid chants of *Shapat Ram ki Khate hain/ Mandir wahin banayenge* (We swear by Ram, we will build the temple there).

The determined stand taken by V.P. Singh, Mulayam Singh Yadav and Laloo Prasad Yadav was no doubt one reason why no sense of panic swept the Muslims in most of the areas the rath passed through. If Advani presented himself as the political Ram, Mulayam Singh Yadav took up the battle for secularism, the battle for the Muslim hearts with a rare passion. In fact, so scathing were his broadsides against the BJP that former Congress(I) chief minister N.D. Tiwari was prompted to say: "The utterances in these sadbhavna meetings are further complicating the issue."

Mulayam backed his rhetoric with state force. As the rath neared Uttar Pradesh a list of RSS and BJP hardcore workers prepared by the Congress(I) during the Emergency was dug up and the arrests started. There were about 275 arrests under NSA and 20 BJP MLAs, including leader of the party in the Vidhan Sabha, Kalyan Singh. Nearly 200,000 people were picked up in both the states as compared to 1,65,000 during the Emergency and 60,000 during the Quit India movement.

Laloo Prasad Yadav explained Advani's arrest by saying: "The Government took this extreme measure to save humanity." But humanity in the country seems more divided than ever before. Between the majority and the minority; the right-wing saffron crowd and the preachers of secularism; between those who accept history with all its warts and those who want to rewrite it to clinch a point; and between a *mahapurush* (great man) and a man who would be messiah. And managing and exploiting these divisions, the BJP hopes one day it will be able to stake claim to the entire edifice.

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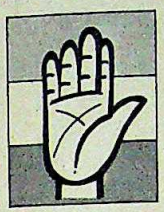
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CONGRESS(I)

Dilemma of Opportunity

By BHASKAR ROY with bureau reports



EVEN with the impending collapse of the V.P. Singh Government the Congress(I) high command is not certain whether this is the perfect time to stage a comeback. The party is still afraid of facing the electorate.

Says AICC(I) spokesman, V.N. Gadgil: "In view of the surcharged atmosphere in the country mid-term polls should be avoided." And though the Congress(I) is still the largest single party in Parliament it did not immediately stake its claim to form the government. Instead, it promised support to the National Front if it replaced V.P. Singh with another leader.

The two most worrying issues for the party are Mandal and mandir. While the Janata Dal will be banking on Mandal to rake in a chunk of backward votes, and the BJP will be playing the mandir card, the Congress(I) is yet to clearly spell out its stand on both these issues. Moreover by taking firm—though somewhat belated—action against the BJP, V.P. Singh appears to have stolen the so-called secular thunder.

In contrast, the Congress(I) has been paying lip service to secularism without backing it up with any action. For instance, contrary to Rajiv's assurance at a National Integration Council meeting, L.K. Advani's rath was allowed into Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka—all Congress(I)-ruled states. Though the party leadership demanded a ban on the movement of the rath, none of the Congress(I) chief ministers dared to halt its wheels—perhaps an indication of Rajiv's loosening grip over his chief ministers. In Karnataka, in particular, the communal riots provided sufficient cause to halt Advani's advance. By dragging its feet on this issue the Congress(I) clearly lost a golden opportunity of winning over the minorities—who have been showing signs of returning to the party's fold going by the success of Rajiv's sadbhavna yatras in Muslim-dominated areas.

Similarly, the party's position on the implementation of the Mandal Commission recommendations remains ambiguous. Some party leaders have hailed the move. Chandrajit Yadav, a prominent Congressman from eastern Uttar Pradesh, recently organised the National Conference on Social Justice where many party MPs from the south praised the extension of reservation to the backward castes as an "extension of Gandhiji's policy for social justice". Other Congressmen support the anti-reservation stir.

The Congress(I) has clearly failed to capitalise on either of these two issues. This combined with the failure to revamp the party's organisation explains the reluctance to face the electorate. By Rajiv's own admission, the party's poor organisational strength was one of the factors leading to the successive defeats in the parliamentary and assembly elections. And due to the sadbhavna yatra, the proposed membership drive for the party polls has not taken place. Admits Balram Jakhar, party general secretary in charge of organisational elections:

Rajiv in Bhagalpur during his Yatra: back in the reckoning

BHAWAN SINGH



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"There is a possibility of extending the deadline for the party elections."

Take the deserted Congress(I) headquarters in Tamil Nadu or the non-activity of the party's unit in electorally crucial Uttar Pradesh. Except for throwing lavish receptions for former chief minister N.D. Tiwari on his return from foreign trips or his birthday—which was celebrated on two different days in October itself—the party has done virtually nothing. The only semblance of activity was the courting of arrest by Sheila Dixit and Balram Singh Yadav along with supporters against Mulayam Singh Yadav's "highhandedness".

YET, despite such glaring shortcomings, Rajiv appears to have hit the come-back trail. His sadbhavna yatra has drawn tremendous response. From Indore in BJP-ruled Madhya Pradesh, to Hyderabad in the south, to sensitive Ayodhya, thousands have poured out to welcome the scion of the Nehru-Gandhi family in search of a lost throne. In town after town they have waited for hours to catch a glimpse of Rajiv and raised slogans like *"Desh ka neta kaisa ho, Rajiv Gandhi jaisa ho"*. (What should the nation's leader be like? He should be like Rajiv Gandhi.)

However even Congressmen concede that Rajiv's popularity has shot up not due to any active effort on the part of the Congress(I) monolith but due to disillusionment with the ruling National Front Government. Says Kamal Nath, Congress(I) MP, and former Sanjay Gandhi street fighter, now a pointsman for encouraging defections from the Janata Dal: "This has been perhaps the most wasted political year in the country's history where we've seen a government headed by a prime minister-'resignate'."

And the Congress(I) would like to face the voters only when this process of disillusionment is complete. The party is depending on the Janata Dal to demolish itself. But it would like to hasten the process by encouraging a split. Whether this is achieved or not, the creation of a strong negative vote against the Janata Dal is already palpable. Says Pramod Tewari, a leader from Uttar Pradesh: "This type of vote (negative vote) does not have a caste or creed. It is cast against those who have failed and in favour of those who can do it."

A negative vote against Rajiv and the Congress(I) had swept the National Front and BJP into power in the Centre and some states. In less than a year, the tables are turned, and now Rajiv and his party are waiting to reap the backlash.

RAJIV GANDHI

"V.P. Singh is guilty of one year of inaction"

THE mood is upbeat. And with good reason. The timing of his comeback drive has been fortuitous. Even as sectarian and fundamentalist politics has erupted, former prime minister Rajiv Gandhi has moved onto centre-stage with his 'march for harmony'. And enthusiastic crowds have responded by giving him a rousing reception at virtually every step of his countrywide sadbhavna yatra. Senior Correspondent HARINDER BAWEJA *spoke to him on the six-seater Kingair plane that was bringing him back to New Delhi from Bhagalpur, just hours before the* BJP *withdrew its support to the Government. Excerpts:*

Q. How would you have handled the current Ram Janmabhoomi crisis, had you been in V.P. Singh's place?

A. It's not my problem, it's theirs (V.P. Singh Government's). It's difficult to say what I would have done because, being out of government, I don't have the inputs that V.P. Singh has. But I definitely would not have wasted almost a year. V.P. Singh is guilty of one year of inaction. Inaction that has put the country in such a mess. Made it so unstable.

Q. But by having allowed the shilanyas, your party is also responsible for creating the problem.

A. I don't think so at all. Firstly, the *shilanyas* passed off peacefully. Secondly, and more importantly, the BJP wanted to start construction at the sanctum sanctorum which is different from the site where the *shilanyas* took place. Let us not confuse the two. The crisis is directly related to the sanctum sanctorum.

Q. Do you blame the BJP?

A. It's not the BJP alone. This government has been a total failure, whichever front you take. Norway has had a minority government for over three years and they have been able to carry everybody with them. But here, this government has not even been able to carry its ministers on any issue.

Q. Can you elaborate?

A. What are the basic things wanted of a government? Security on the borders has become very weak. Internal tensions have weakened us even further. Communal tension is erupting in the most unexpected of places. And look at the prices, they are only soaring.

Q. But won't you grant political acumen to V.P. Singh? He has managed to emerge out of so many crises.

A. The question is not whether he gets out of a crisis but whether the nation has got out of a single crisis ever since he came in.

Q. But isn't he politically wily?

A. I'll answer that differently. Basically you need to be tied to principles and ideology to provide good leadership. I don't think V.P. Singh has any principles or ideology. He's going on issue-based politics, with no long-term thinking.

Q. Do you think we are heading for a mid-term poll?

A. Definitely. In fact, definitely by the budget session. This government will find it very difficult to present the budget. The prices will go totally out of control by then.

Q. Who do you think will win the elections?

A. The Congress(I) of course.

Q. Why is it so obvious?

A. There is a strong feeling that things are not going well in the country. I will divide it all under three heads. The first is Punjab, Kashmir and Assam. Second is communal and caste tension. And finally the economic problems and the price rise. The Government's performance has been disastrous on all these fronts.

Q. But hasn't your performance as an opposition party also been dismal?

A. I agree. We are a bad opposition party. But they're a bad governing party and we're learning quicker than they are.

Q. But you are only gaining a negative vote.

A. It's quite natural. The Janata Dal came up because we made mistakes.

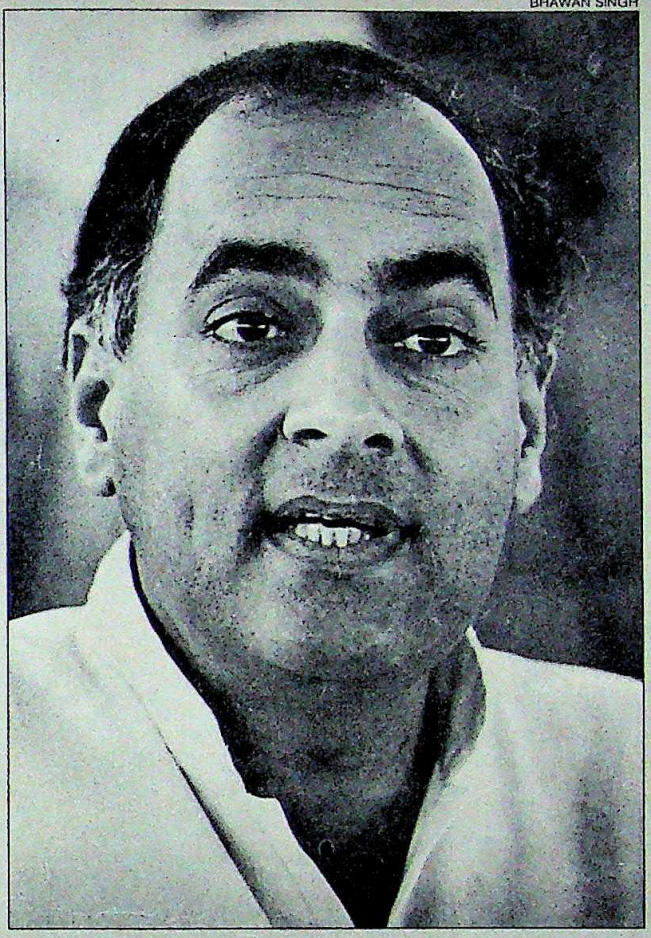
Q. Where do you think you went wrong as prime minister?

A. I lost communication with the people which was a very bad thing to happen. We were not able to project

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BHAWAN SINGH



our achievements which were substantial. I should have also taken strong action against the chief ministers for the Meerut and Bhagalpur riots. And perhaps Babri Masjid issue could have been handled better. Of course, here lies a question for which we'll never have an answer. On whether we should have stopped the *shila pujas*. The Home Ministry was of the view that we didn't have the force to stop the ceremony. Stopping it was an option or perhaps it would have misfired.

Q. ***What has been achieved by your Sadbhavna yatra?***

A. The tremendous response on the theme of sadbhavna gives me tremendous faith in the people. We leaders mess up things but I'm sure the people will keep us on the right track.

Q. ***You have been drawing very large crowds but so have L.K. Advani, V.P. Singh and Mulayam Singh Yadav. What does this mean?***

A. Maybe people are looking for an alternative.

Q. ***Do you think you're on a comeback trail?***

A. I haven't looked at the sadbhavna yatra in that way. The people are unhappy with the way things are going and they are looking to the Congress(I). They are not looking at the mid-term poll along caste or religious lines but for stability and performance. And this government certainly hasn't performed.

Q. ***Do you think that V.P. Singh is adamant about implementing the Mandal report because the backward classes represent a solid vote bank?***

A. I think V.P. Singh has even backtracked on Mandal. First he said they'd implement it in toto and then it came down to some, not all, Central Government departments and then to those states who want it. The Congress(I) favours special action for backward classes including reservations but it must be broad-based. How do you determine who is backward? The Mandal report has some very good recommendations just as there are some which we don't accept. V.P. Singh should have built a national consensus instead of just diving into it. Unfortunately, he didn't because he was more worried about Devi Lal's rally than about protecting his own chair.

> **"We are a bad opposition party. But they are a bad governing party and we're learning fast."**

Q. ***You are the largest party in Parliament. Will you stake your claim to form a government?***

A. We don't want to form a government without a popular mandate.

Q. ***Are you scared of coming face to face with Ayodhya, Mandal, Punjab and Kashmir?***

A. We can tackle all of that. It's the economy which is difficult to control. But even for the others you need a mandate. Not with a weak government at the Centre and specially not with the mess which exists now.

Q. ***You have said you will not support V.P. Singh or the BJP. Does it mean you'll support Chandra Shekhar?***

A. Well, we've said anyone but V.P. Singh. Let us see what happens.

Q. ***Have you met Chandra Shekhar?***

A. No.

Q. ***Any communication on the telephone or through emissaries?***

A. Not yet *(smiles)*.

Q. ***Have you learnt any lessons while you've been out of power?***

A. Plenty. Because you see situations from a different point of view, which you don't when you're in the government. You see things from the peoples' point of view. And ultimately, who is the government for? As I said earlier, we shouldn't have lost communication with the people. Now the Congress(I) Working Committee takes decisions only after several inputs have been pumped in by people who have done their groundwork.

Q. ***You mean there is no coterie now?***

A. Well, now there are several sources.

Q. ***It is being said that if Mrs Gandhi was around she would have formed a government by now?***

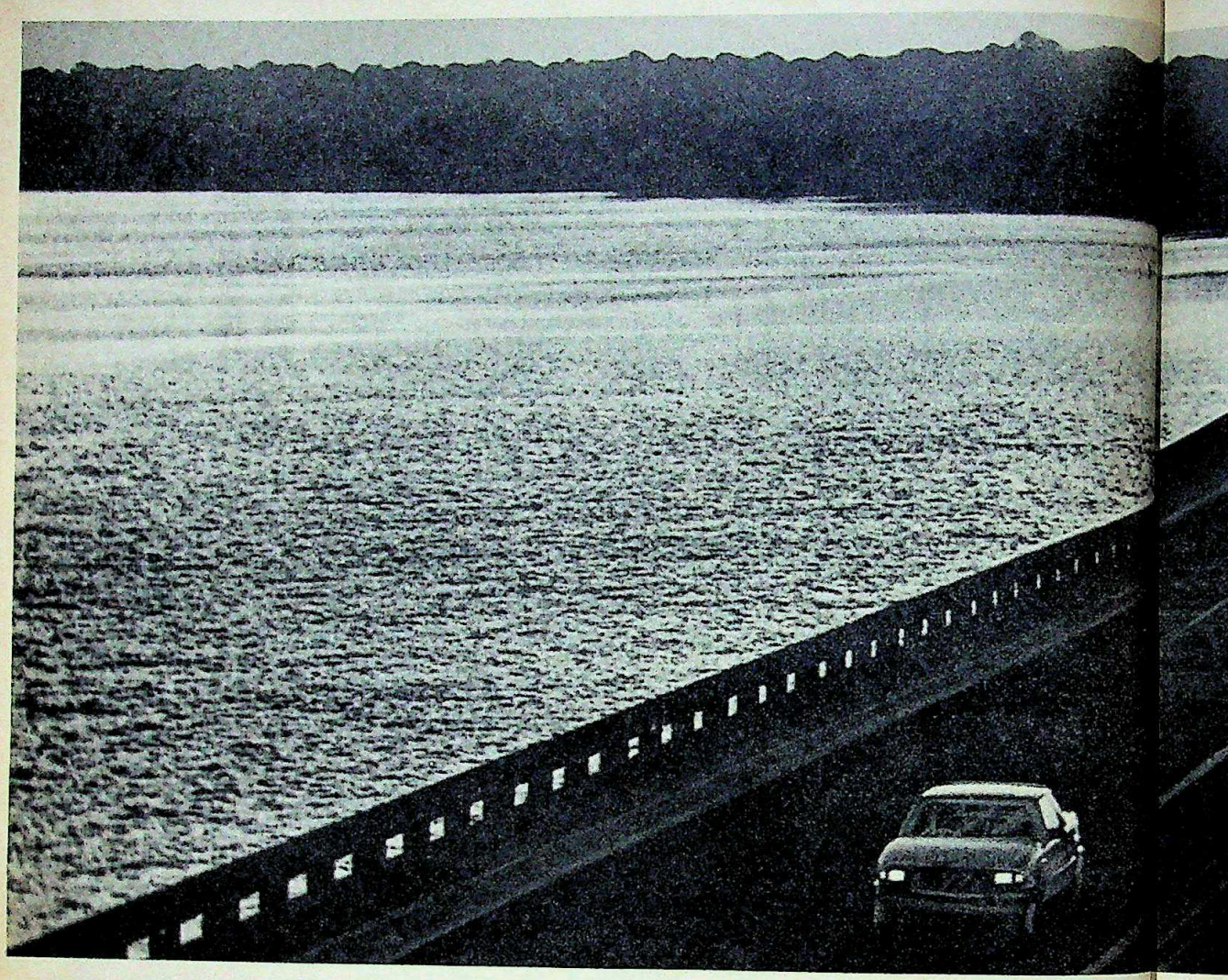
A. May be. But in 1977, she didn't come out for almost a year. She came out only after the Congress(I) split. Actually, I think we are lethargic because even as an opposition party, our numbers are large. But I can say that our second tenure will be better than the first one.

Q. ***Have you finally accepted politics as a full time profession?***

A. Yes. Only sometimes I feel like taking a break. That I guess is only human.

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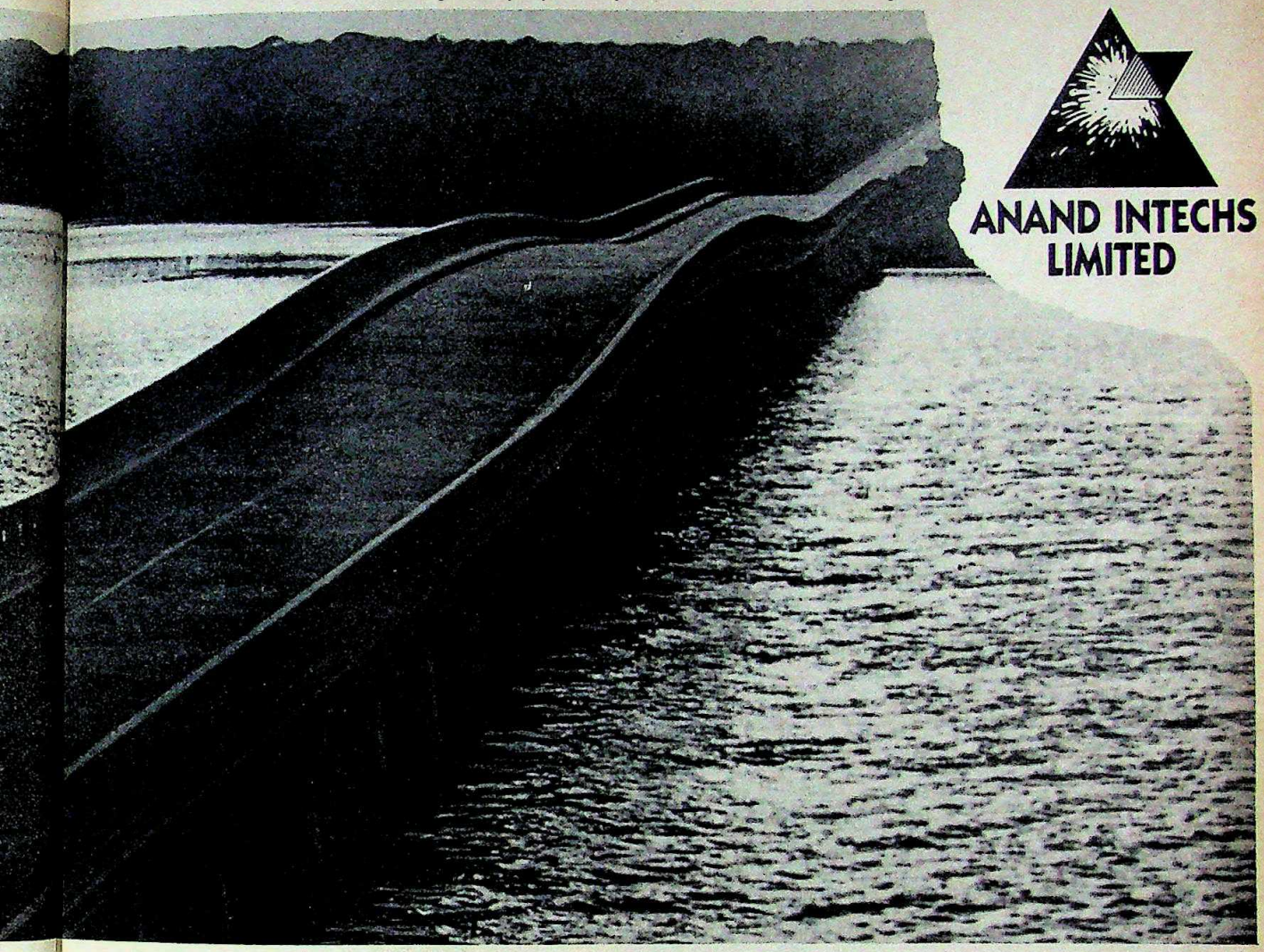
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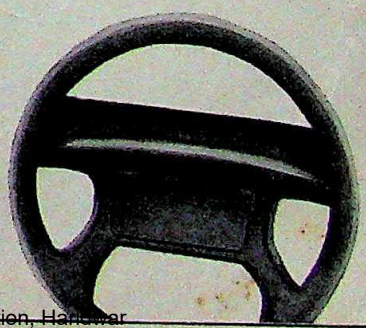
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AMETHI AND FATEHPUR

Tale of Two Boroughs

While Rajiv Gandhi's once pampered constituency is now crying for attention, V.P. Singh's electorate are still waiting for the promises of prosperity to materialise.

By DILIP AWASTHI

THE signs of decay are unmistakable. The constituency on which Rajiv Gandhi lavished money and attention used to look spick and span. Now it's fallen on hard times and wears the bedraggled look of a woman caught in a downpour with all her finery reduced to tatters.

The decline has taken just 10 months. As the sources of cash have dried up, so too have the canals and tube-wells. Out of the 50-odd tube-wells in Amethi block, only three are currently working. Massive pot-holes have appeared on roads which once had a carpeted feel about them. It's not just a case of roads not being maintained. The work of constructing new ones such as the Jamo-Bhadar road or the Bahadurpur-Rae Barelli road has now been completely abandoned.

The downward slide is all too obvious to commuters. At the height of Amethi's prosperity, as many as 205 Uttar Pradesh Roadways buses plied the Lucknow-Jagdishpur highway and passengers had to wait barely 15 minutes for a bus during the day. Those were the good old days. Now the number of buses has been slashed to 90 and waiting times can range from anything between two and three hours.

Jagdishpur industrial area is perhaps the best example of how fast the deterioration has occured under V.P. Singh's Government. Of the 150 small industrial units operating till last year, only 12 are functioning. Says Naeem Mohsin, director of Arif Cements: "The main reason is the sudden withdrawal of financial institutions. Those people, whether from the government agencies or banks, who used to come themselves to visit each and every unit to find out the problems, have become unavailable." The prestigious Amethi Textiles is all set to start production: but it has no working capital. Jagdishpur Hitech Printers, which was printing railway tickets and time-tables till last year, has been wound up. The proposed projects like the Aluminium Foils of Birlas, Hindustan Teleprinters and Usha Rectifiers have either been abandoned or little work has been done. A gas-based power project that was scheduled to come up in Jagdishpur is being shifted to some other site most probably Etawah. During INDIA TODAY's last survey of Jagdishpur in September 1989, most industrialists there had boasted of an uninterrupted power supply. No longer. Says Prem Khosla, owner of Punit Polypack which makes plastic products: "There are now no less than 50 to 60 power breakdowns in any month."

The figures alone speak eloquently of the fall in Amethi's fortunes:

► Under Rajiv Gandhi, help from the Centre ranged from Rs 2 crore to Rs 3 crore per year for development work. This has dried up. As if that wasn't bad enough, the Sultanpur district plan has been slashed from Rs 15 crore in 1989 to Rs 12 crore in the current year.

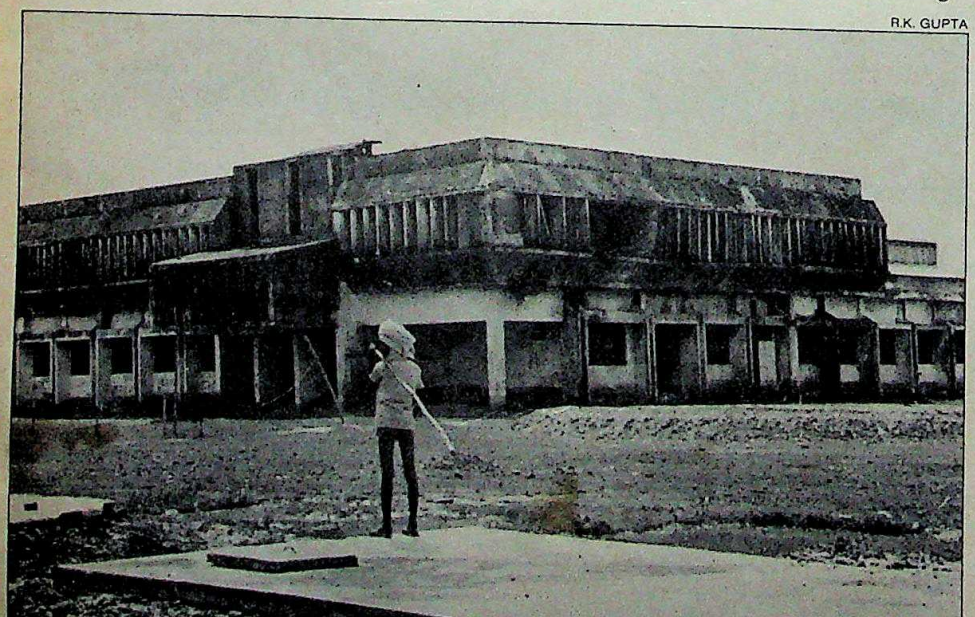
► There was a special provision of Rs 1 crore in 1989 for rural electrification in the same year. There is no such provision in the current year.

► As many as 1,254 of the total 1,299 villages in the Amethi constituency had been electrified up to last year. The remaining 45 villages are still waiting for their connections.

Predictably, the people of Amethi have started grumbling—a development which the Congress(I) has wasted no time in exploiting. A pre-election feeling is already in the air with posters of Rajiv and slogans such as

Amethi, where Rajiv lavished all care, has fallen on hard times, with cash having dried up and only 12 of the 150 industrial units still functioning.

R.K. GUPTA



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"Thakure ki Buddhi, Ahire ka bal: Bhaar mein ghus gaya Janata Dal" (the brain of the Thakur and the muscle power of the Ahir (Yadav), have taken the Janata Dal to the dogs). Another one *is: "Sir pe topi, haath mein kamandal: V.P. ko le dooba Mandal"* (A cap on his head and a *kamandal* (which Sadhus carry) in his hand, the Mandal report has sunk Singh).

Even the local Janata Dal leaders feel sore at the way Amethi has been treated. Says Anand Krishan, founder of the Janata Dal in Gauri Ganj: "There was no hope of us getting the parliamentary seat but we could have at least improved our chances in the assembly elections. Our government somehow did not realise this. Now let us see if Mandal can give us some assembly seats here."

Ram Harsh Singh, the only Janata Dal block *pramukh* among the 16 blocks, joined the Congress(I) during Rajiv's September visit. Singh who got a brand new jeep as a gift from the Congress(I) like the other 15 *pramukhs* says: "When this government stopped Amethi's development, I had no choice but to leave the party."

Khunna-ka-taal is one of many small villages whose inhabitants are anxiously awaiting Rajiv's return to power—though not for the best of ideological reasons. The inhabitants are all prostitutes pining for the golden age of endless clients. A once roaring trade has fizzled out.

Talk to any of the girls and they tell the same story: that when "bhaiya" was in power, there was a lot of money to be made. Young contractors working in the area would come to Khunna-ka-taal for "relaxation" after a day's work. Now, says Sushila: "Two to three days pass without a single client." And the parting shot from her colleague, Nirmala, was: "*Ab bhaiya kab lautenge?*" (When will Rajiv become the prime minister again?).

FATEHPUR

No Benefit

IF 10 months have been long enough to seal Amethi's decline, they haven't been sufficient to transform Fatehpur. V.P. Singh's electorate are still waiting—not too patiently—for the promises of prosperity to materialise.

Though district officials keep assuring them that a number of Central projects are being planned, with some already in the pipeline, they remain distinctly unimpressed. They know better than anybody that conditions in the

OPINION POLL

Rajiv Rides Again

HOW would the electorate of Fatehpur vote if an election were held tomorrow pitting V.P. Singh against Rajiv Gandhi? Or V.P. Singh against L.K. Advani? To gauge the current mood in Fatehpur as well as in Rajiv Gandhi's constituency of Amethi, INDIA TODAY commissioned MARG to conduct an opinion poll between October 21 and October 23. More than two thousand voters spread across five assembly segments in both constituencies were asked to make an electoral choice between Rajiv and V.P. Singh; Rajiv and Advani and V.P. Singh and Advani. While Rajiv won all his face-offs, V.P. Singh conceded ground to Advani even in Fatehpur. The one overwhelming reason cited by voters for this disenchantment was spiralling prices.

V.P. Singh Loses in His Homeground





Rajiv Gandhi vs V.P. Singh

AMETHI	79%	21%
FATEHPUR	58%	42%

Rajiv Keeps L.K. Advani At Bay



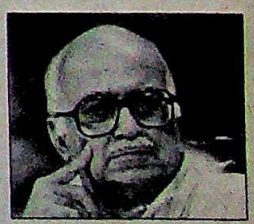


Rajiv Gandhi vs L.K. Advani

AMETHI	83%	17%
FATEHPUR	55%	45%

Advani Pips V.P. Singh in a Close Fight





V.P. Singh vs L.K. Advani

AMETHI	47%	53%
FATEHPUR	45%	55%

('Don't knows' excluded)

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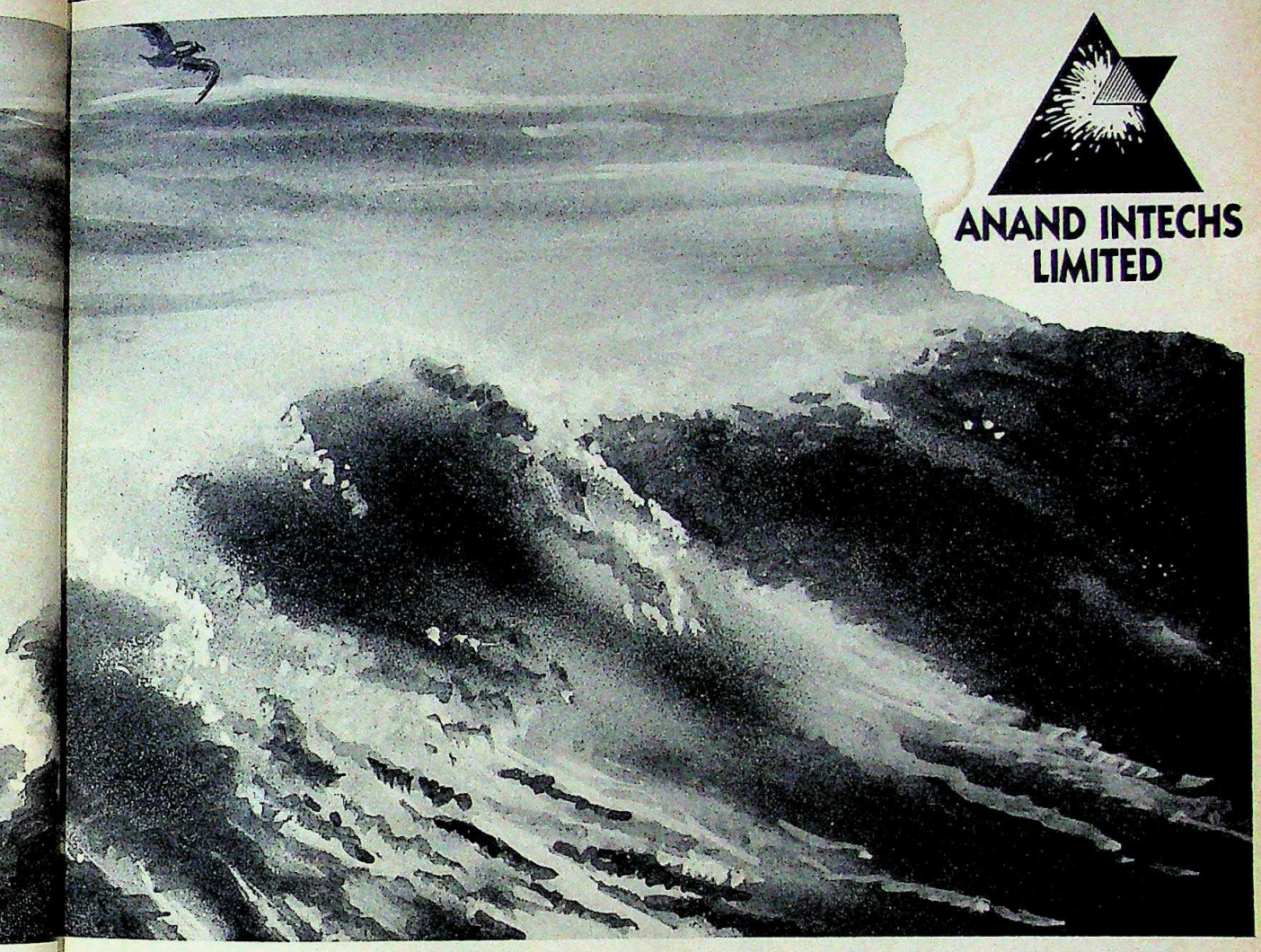
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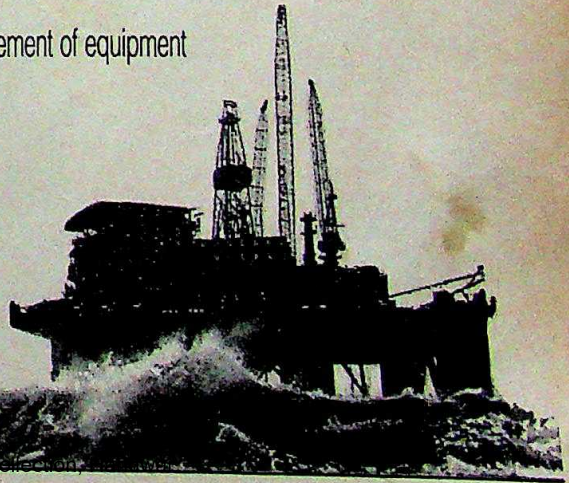
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constituency are as appalling as they were when the prime minister sought their votes. Their hopes of seeing Fatehpur transformed into a second Amethi are fading fast—confirmed by Singh's failure to visit the constituency since making a couple of hurried visits in May—and there is a feeling that the Central Government is on the way out.

It's an impression which local Congress(I) leaders enjoy developing at leisure and with more than a touch of smugness. Says Khan Gufran Zahidi, former Congress MLA from Fatehpur: "We kept warning these people that Raja Sahib never contests twice from the same place. Now you can see this happening in Fatehpur again."

While Amethi declines, Fatehpur stagnates. Power breakdowns are common in the main town while villages get just eight to 10 hours' supply a day. The overloaded jeeps and trekkers plying on the main roads are a reflection of how badly organised the transport infra structure in the constituency is. Says Rajendra Kumar Dwivedi, a farmer of Aurrai village, who was awarded Rs 1 lakh last year by the Government for being the best farmer in the district: "The place has not become the prime minister's constituency. In fact things have further deteriorated ever since differences cropped up between V.P. Singh and Mulayam Singh. The state Government has almost withdrawn its activities like the supply of seeds, fertilisers and other goods."

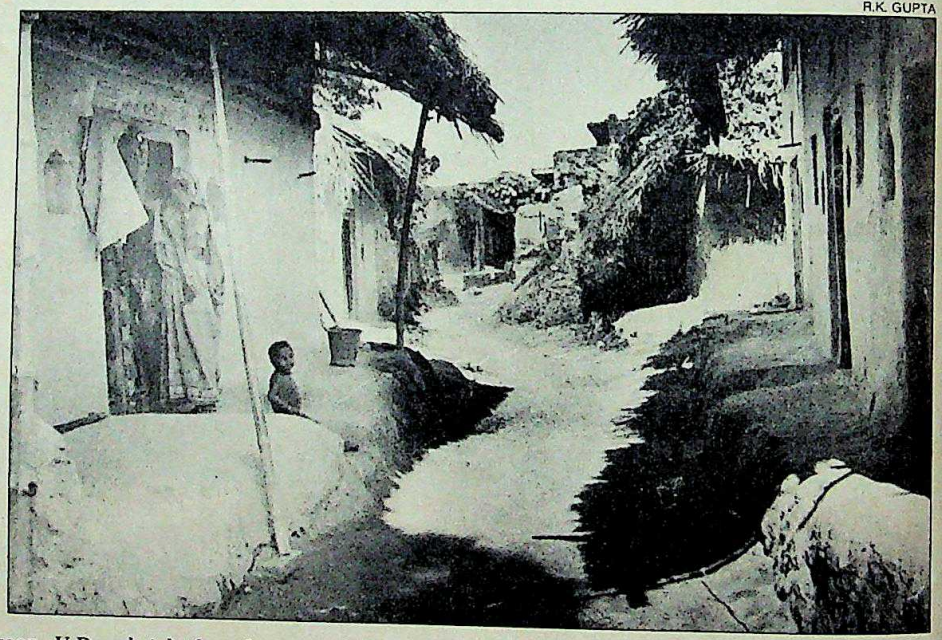
Some, however, believe that within another year the planned improvements will start to show. Arvind Kumar Jain, SSP, who took over after the Dariyapur rape case in May, claims a 60-per cent drop in murder cases in the last three months and boasts of a total absence of atrocities against Harijans. "Now all police stations, outposts and even police mobile vans have been provided with wireless sets only because Fatehpur is the prime minister's constituency," says he.

Attempts are of course being made to get something going. Central schemes have of late also started making their presence felt, although slowly. All the major telephone exchanges around Fatehpur are being made electronic; at least three major superfast trains have started halting in Fatehpur; and on the industrial front a survey has already been completed for a sugar mill in the cooperative sector and the Uttar Pradesh State Industrial Development Corporation has written to the district magistrate to identify 1,000 acres of land for a gas-based fertiliser plant.

The prime minister indeed did make attempts to show that he has not forgotten his constituency and laid bricks for a few unambitious schemes. During his visit of May 9, V.P. Singh laid the foundation-stone of new projects including the Jaraulli pump canal for irrigation in Asothar, a Mahila degree college and a sewage scheme for Fatehpur city.

The conditions in the prime minister's constituency are appalling and the feeling among the electorate is that the Government is on its way out.

R.K. GUPTA



NOR has the constituency remained completely unscathed by the reservation issue. It's generated a far more lively debate than even the progress of the Government's fertiliser schemes. Says Shiv Bhawan Singh, principal of Jawaharlal Memorial Higher Secondary School, in Kishunpur: "In the present regime we have got nothing but casteism at the pettiest level. Though the Thakurs supported Singh in a big way in the last elections, the situation is not the same now. I think most of the Thakurs will definitely not side with the prime minister because he introduced the Mandal Commission report."

The backward castes are also pretty divided on whether the prime minister will get their support. Says Akhilesh Chandra Singh, a Kurmi farmer of Rachpalpur village: "So far only Yadavas seem to be making merry because of reservation. Out of the 85 policemen recruited last month in Fatehpur, 45 were Yadavas. We know that the rest of us will not get any benefits."

The anti-reservation agitation, though not on a very large scale, has made its presence felt. At least half a dozen buses were burnt, a post office set on fire and two students opposed to the Mandal report attempted suicide.

The general feeling of disgruntlement was illustrated by the warm reception accorded to Rajiv Gandhi's padyatra in Fatehpur on October 11. Many admit that it proved to be quite a spectacle, almost matching the euphoria during Singh's visit in January. "Thakurs and Kurmis turned out in large numbers," says Sharda Misra of the Mahila Congress.

While the Congress(I)'s optimism grows in leaps and bounds, all that the people of Fatehpur can do is to hold on to whatever remains of their tattered dreams. But it seems now to be a question of blind faith more than any real expectation.

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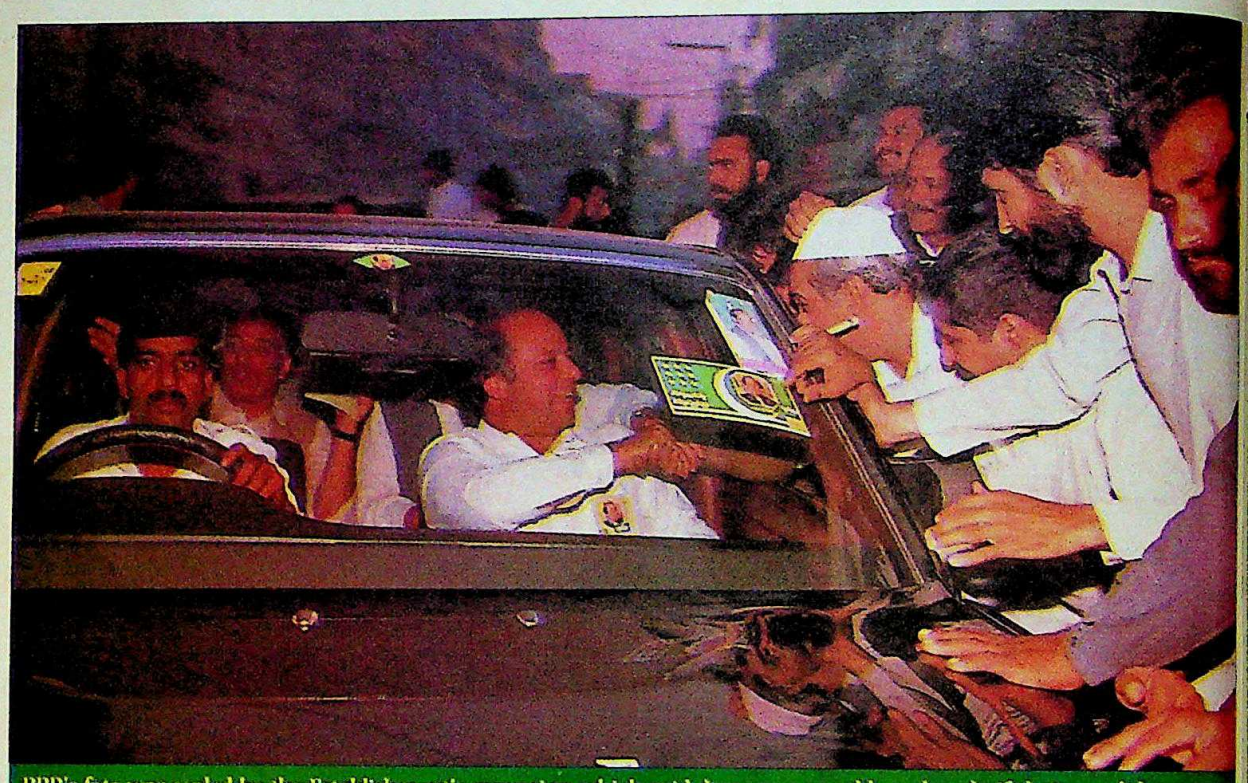
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PPP's fate was sealed by the Establishment's campaign which said democracy could work only if their candidates won

PAKISTAN

Clear Verdict, Unclear Future

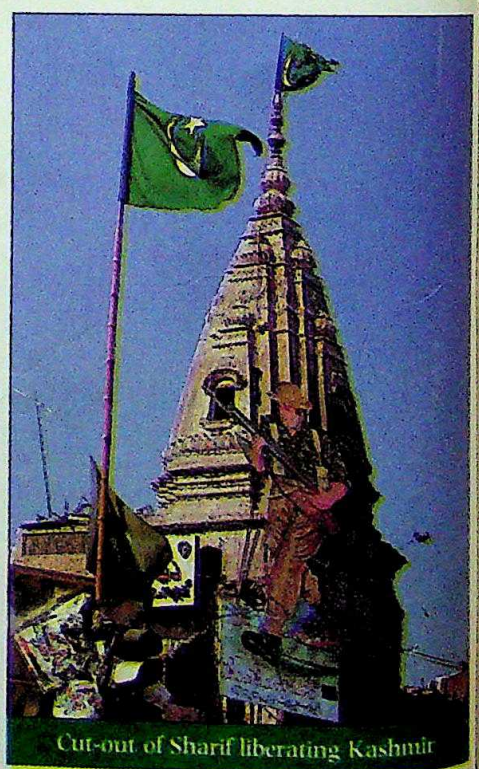
The IJI combine backed by the military-bureaucratic complex may have routed the PPP and swept to power. But the confrontation is bound to continue.

Text by SHEKHAR GUPTA in Pakistan
Photographs by SHARAD SAXENA

ONCE dismissed as "Zia's orphans", the dozen-odd politicians with disparate ideological shades were considered—prior to last fortnight's elections in Pakistan—no more than hirelings of the establishment; the Pakistani euphemism for the powerful military-bureaucratic complex.

But the "orphans" turned into inheritors overnight as a tidal wave of electoral support swept across Pakistan, abating a bit in Sindh but sweeping the Benazir Bhutto-led Pakistan People's Party (PPP) strongholds in Punjab and drowning her shrill cries of foul play and rigging.

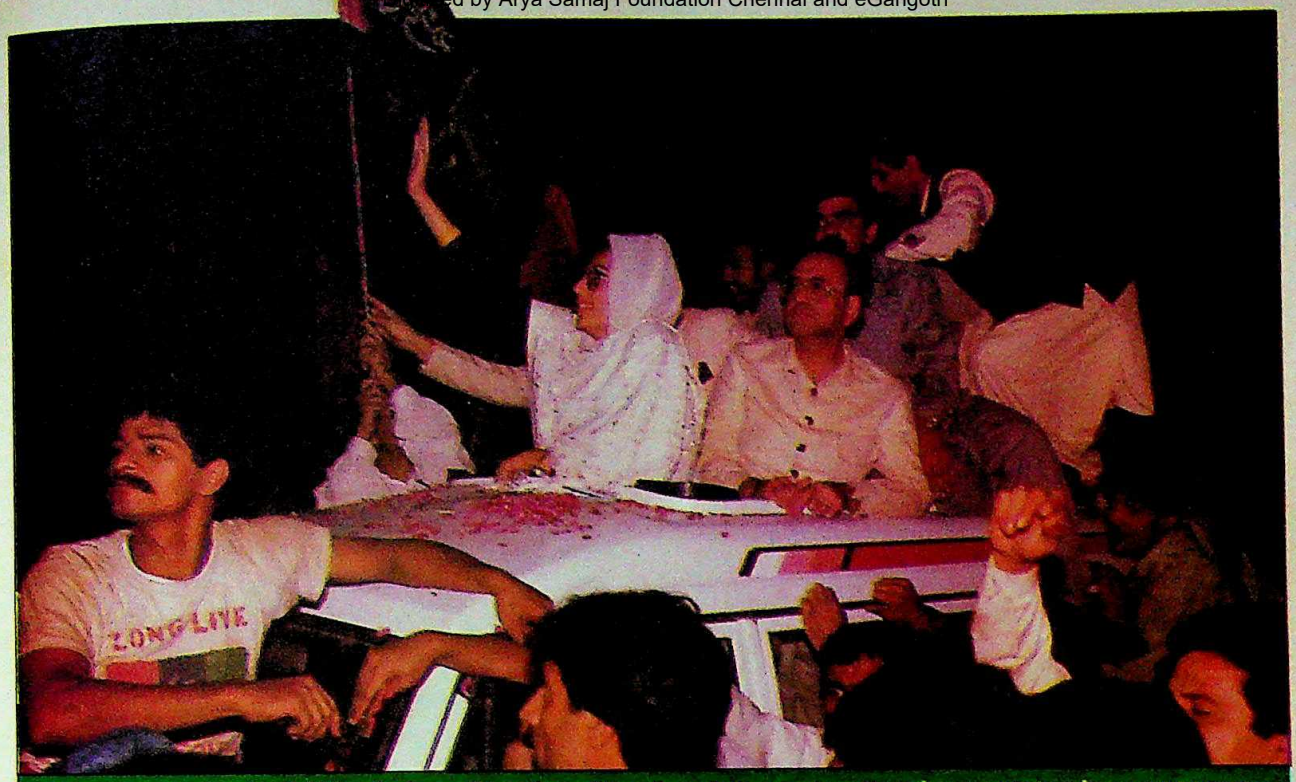
When the dust settled after what is considered the crassest, most abusive and yet the most issueless election campaign in Pakistan's electoral history, the 13-member Islamic Jamhoori Ittehad (IJI) or the Islamic Democratic Alliance, led by former Punjab chief minister Mian Nawaz Sharif, had been swept to power with 105 votes in the 207-member National Assembly. Not only had the IJI bettered the PPP's 1988 record of 92 seats, it had also secured a clear majority by itself. And, with the likely support of the Mohajir Qaumi Mahaz (MQM) and other sundry groups, it seemed headed towards a two-thirds majority. "This is as clear a victory as anyone ever achieved in an election," said caretaker Prime Minister Ghulam Mustafa Jatoi, who won from both the constituencies he contested.



Cut-out of Sharif liberating Kashmir

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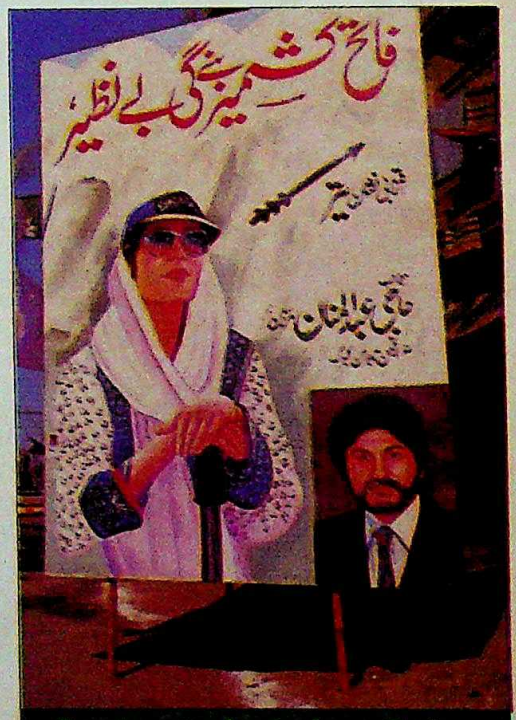


Benazir made the tactical blunder by making the poll a referendum on corruption charges against her government

Benazir, however, was unrelenting: "It is landslide rigging. I feel sorry for Pakistan." Though momentarily stunned—even diehard PPP opponents were predicting no less than 70 seats for the party—Benazir and her advisers were quickly recasting their strategy. While they are unlikely to take to the streets, they will continue to harp on the rigging theme. How effective that strategy will be is doubtful.

TO begin with, they failed to produce any devastating evidence of rigging on polling day. And PPP leaders are only now realising the impact of the relentless 10-week campaign against them by the establishment and the IJI. The combined barrage of President Ghulam Ishaq Khan's criticism, the army generals' insinuations of treason, the IJI's smear campaign, corruption cases and, of course, the allegations of corruption against Benazir's husband Asif Ali Zardari, demolished her party's prospects. In the run-up to the poll the Government cast away all pretensions to impartiality—with the official media spearheading the smear campaign, even parading on television alleged Indian-trained terrorists from Al Zulfiqar.

Also, taking a cue from the St Kitts forgeries in India, the establishment's organisers planted letters allegedly written by Benazir to her American friends asking them to influence India to attack Pakistan to distract the army. Then, there were unabashedly doctored interviews with political leaders on national television painting the PPP in poor light. And, to cap it all, there was the President's address to the nation on the eve of the elections in which he made a clear pitch for the IJI, repeating all the allegations of corruption and anti-national activity against Benazir. "He behaved like the President for the IJI and not the President of the nation," charged Mian Khurshid Kasuri, general secretary of the PPP-led People's Democratic Alliance. Jehangir Badr, petroleum and natural resources minister under Benazir was more bitter: "He is the same as Zia, except that he wore a *wardi* (uniform) and these guys wear *achkans*."



Benazir poster showing her at Siachen

More than the rigging it was this campaign that sealed the PPP's fate. It was as if the establishment was informing the voters every day that democracy was only going to work if they voted for their candidates. Benazir and her supporters made protest noises but never brought matters to a head mainly because of the over-confidence that they could still swing the poll their way. They also made a tactical blunder by making the poll a referendum on corruption against the Benazir government and played into the caretaker government's hands.

The dominant PPP slogan of the campaign was *"Ya Allah, Ya Rasul,*

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Benazir bekasur" (In the name of God, Benazir is innocent) which was quickly adapted by the IJI into "Benazir *beasul*" (unprincipled). Even Benazir's advisers now admit that, helped along by the PPP's blunders, the IJI attained a victory that even its leaders hadn't expected. They were able to completely rout the PPP in Punjab, reducing its 1988 bag of 54 seats to 11. Even in Sindh, the IJI and its ally, the MQM, swelled their kitty while in the Frontier Province they inflicted on the PPP the bitterest humiliation of all, a defeat for Benazir Bhutto herself in Peshawar. Shrewd adjustments made with Khan Wali Khan's Awami National Party (ANP) in the Frontier Province and the estranged PPP ally, the MQM, in Sindh prevented a split in the anti-PPP vote.

And if the electorate had any doubts about the IJI coalition surviving as a stable government, the President lent a helping hand by passing a tell-tale ordinance a day before the poll banning defections, violation of the party whip and indiscipline by any new legislator. The key factor in the new ordinance was that members of a party were defined as those who



Campaigning on both sides was jingoistic and consisted largely of anti-India rhetoric

ELECTIONEERING

Rabid and Rumbustious

THE atmosphere in Lahore was electric. Both Benazir Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif were holding their last rallies. Benazir drove in at the head of a huge, chaotic procession. Less than a mile away, the IJI rally was more orderly. But there was no questioning the enthusiasm.

As campaigning came to an end at the stroke of midnight, the score was even. When it came to numbers, Benazir had won by thousands. But the slanging match was won by the IJI. The verbal duel had moved to the national press with advertisements degenerating into the cheapest innuendoes. One showed a caricature of Asif Zardari with the question: "Who am I?" And then a whole list of clues beginning with *"Zan bhi meri, zar bhi meri"* (the woman is mine and the cash is mine).

The PPP retaliated by calling steel tycoon Nawaz Sharif the *"Ganja Lohar"* (bald blacksmith), and told him to pick up his bicycle (the IJI symbol) and run. When it came to singing praise of Benazir, the beat was pure disco. *"Ya Allah Ya Rasul, Benazir bekasur"* was a favourite.

The IJI, however had no time for music. It was Hafeez Salman Butt, the Jamaat's rabble-rouser, who carried the day when he cried: "When a flood recedes it leaves behind the rotten corpses of animals. The flood will leave behind the political corpses of Benazir and Nusrat. Wrap them in the Indian tricolour and bury them in filth." Jamaat workers even went to the extent of offering "Crush India" stickers—that showed a map of India minus Kashmir and with a sword piercing India's heart—to the two Indian correspondents at the rally.

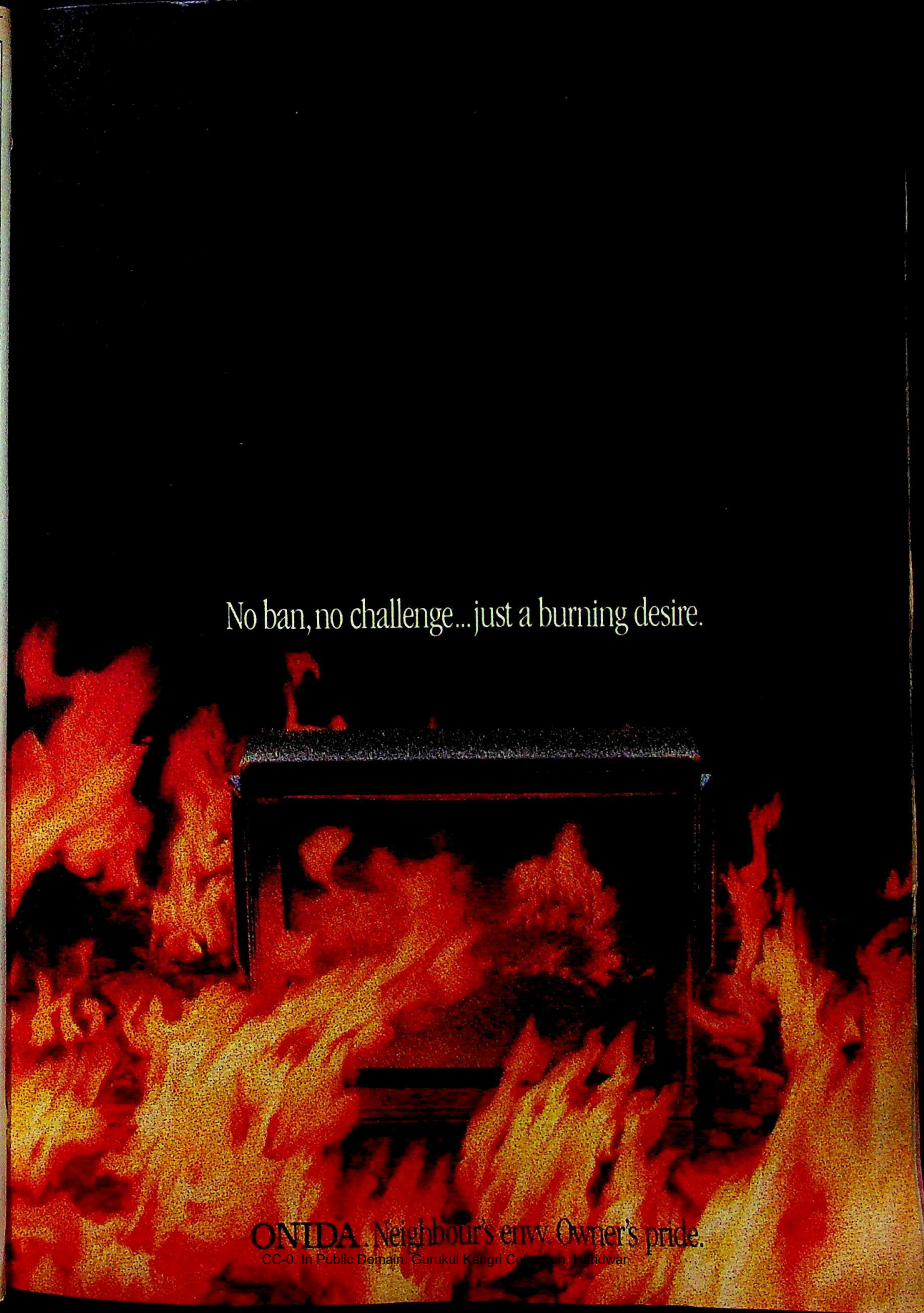
The greatest cheer was reserved for Ejaz-ul-Haq, Zia's son, who promptly announced: *"Na teer chahiye na talwar chahiye, Zia-ul-Haq shaheed kee lalkar chahiye"* (We don't want arrows or swords, we want to hear the cry of Zia the martyr).

The one factor that was ever present was India. And both sides liberally indulged in India-bashing, promising to "liberate" Kashmir. The PPP's favourite was a Benazir standing on the Siachen pass—dressed in a salwar kameez—with a cap bearing the label Siachen and the claim that she had restored to Pakistan the glacier gifted to India by Zia.

Nawaz—who spoke of making a thousand nuclear bombs if the US continued to act funny and sending Nusrat Bhutto to Delhi—did better. Dressed in military gear, he grimly jumped over minefields from the spire of a temple in Lahore, on his way to liberating Kashmir. Now he is embarrassed when reminded of this: "This is an election, you shouldn't take everything seriously."

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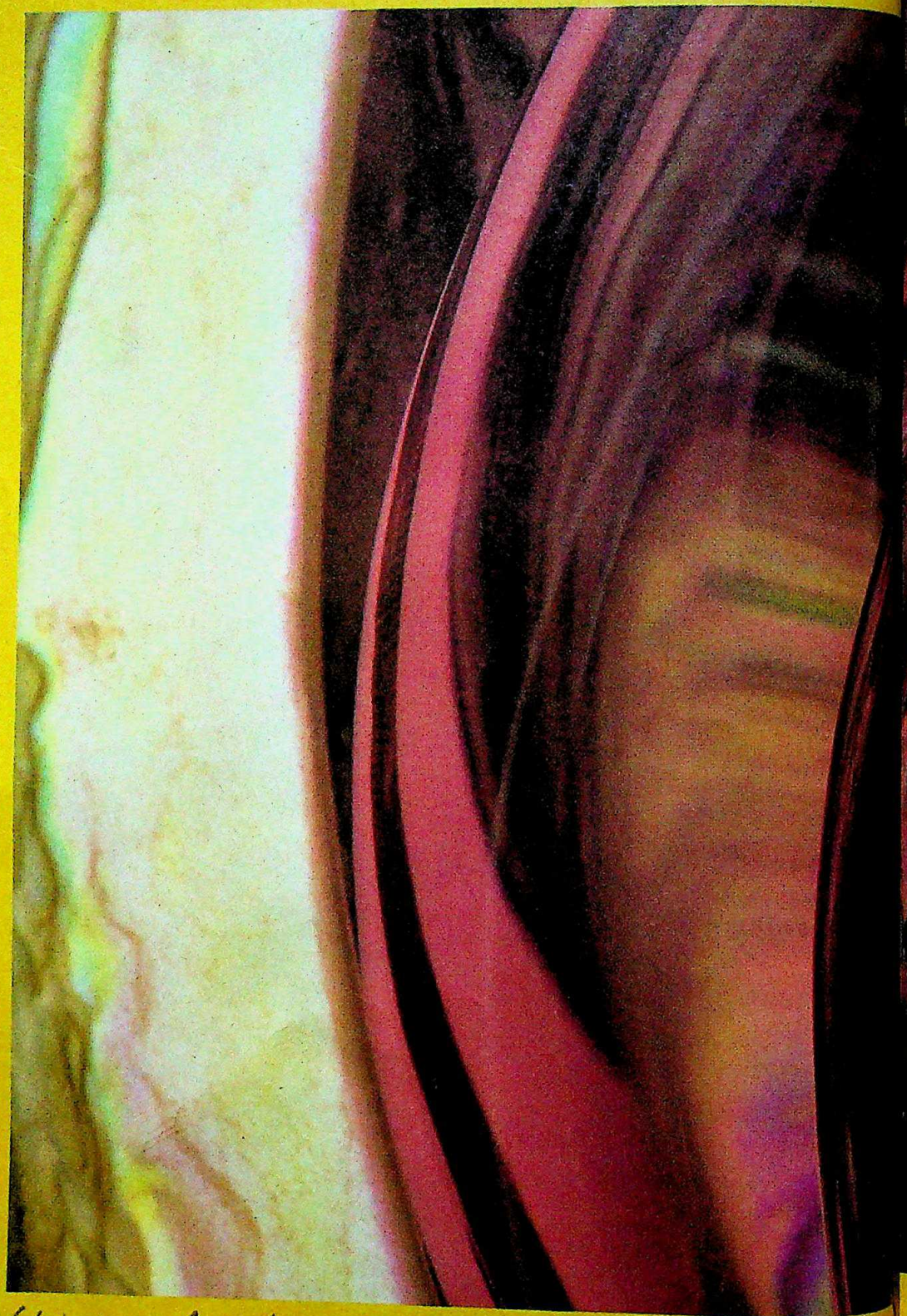
No ban, no challenge... just a burning desire.



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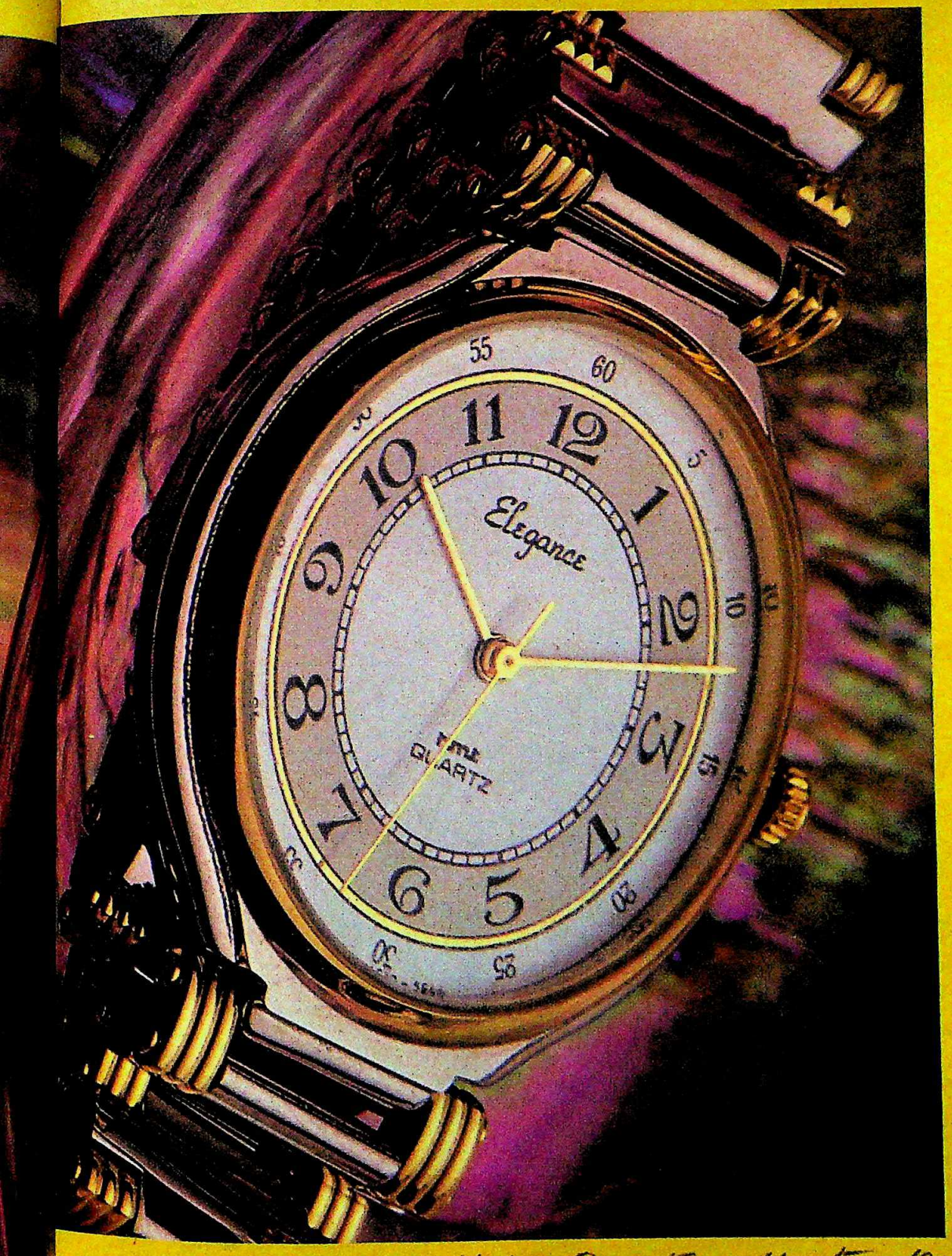
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'Wrist Art'

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HMT Quartz collection '91

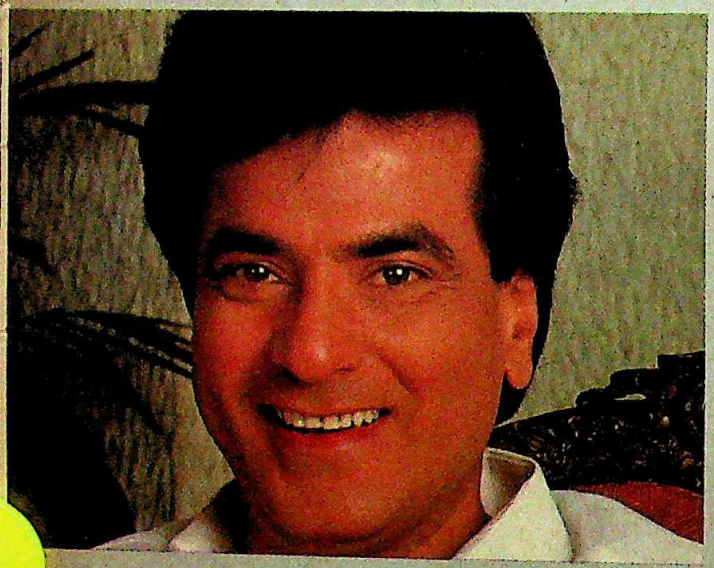
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contested on a common symbol. Overnight, the IJI, an uncomfortable if raucous coalition of 13 parties, was forged into a party by executive fiat.

Benazir's best bet now is that the coalition cannot form a stable government. PPP leaders point to the contradictions inherent between the IJI constituents and their allies. For instance, the Jamaat has its own agenda of *Jehad* and Islamisation of the entire region, which the other IJI constituents informally joke about. Also, in the Frontier, Khan's ANP has a left-of-centre agenda and an Afghan policy which many in the IJI consider anti-national and anti-Islamic. Moreover, in urban Sindh the support of the MQM is bound to become a liability as the neo-fascist organisation recovers from the victory celebrations and demands its pound of flesh. "The break-up of the IJI will come sooner than you think," said PPP General Secretary Sheikh Rafiq.

It was with these apprehensions in mind that the IJI leaders set about constituting the new Government in Islamabad. Mian Nawaz Sharif seemed the front-runner in a three-way race between him, Jatoi and Mohammad Khan Junejo. His supporters were already hailing him as the new prime minister. And certainly Punjab's "Man of Steel" was making an effort to project himself as an independent and progressive leader backed by a popular mandate. Despite his confidence, there was still a lot of scepticism about his and other IJI leaders' claims that the new Government would function independent of the army and the President.

The reason for the scepticism lies in the fact that particular groups like the Jamaat will complete the military-bureaucracy-clergy nexus and make impossible demands on the Government beginning with the liberation of Afghanistan, where both the US and the Saudis—the two main financiers of the Mujahedin—seem to have lost interest.

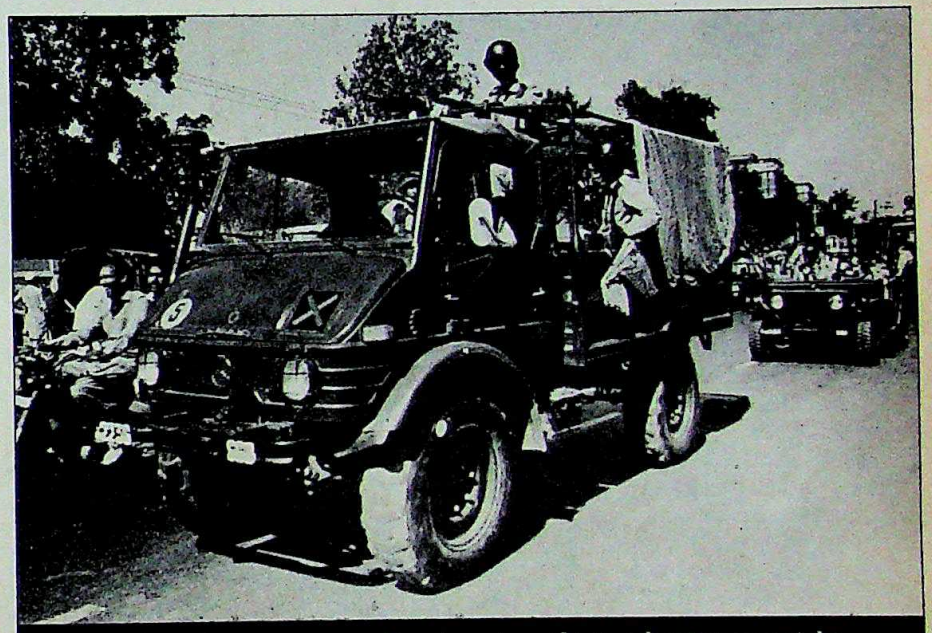
Analysts also foresee tension on other foreign policy issues. For instance, Kashmir where the Jamaat would want to draw blood immediately. As a senior Pakistani bureaucrat admitted: "In the euphoria of victory the IJI must also look at the scary agenda which brought it to power. They are supposed to conquer Iraq, Afghanistan, Kashmir and then move to Soviet Central Asia and Kashgar. And all of that immediately."

HOWEVER, the main foreign policy issue that will be a source of tension is the suspension of US aid last month after the US Administration failed to certify Pakistan's non-nuclear status. As soon as it comes into power, the IJI would like to forget all about its anti-US campaign and persuade Washington to resume aid without which the Pakistani economy would crumble. Much depends on what the Americans think of the election and the charges of rigging. Besides, Benazir has powerful supporters at Capitol Hill. But the IJI will promise increased help to the US in the Gulf and even, according to some indications, a reprieve for Benazir and her people from persecution, as a quid pro quo for aid. There are many in the Islamabad diplomatic circles who feel the Americans may indeed be inclined to accept such a deal. But even this will be opposed by many in the ruling coalition who want key PPP leaders convicted, and if possible banished from the political arena forever.

That could mean strife and a return to the streets by the PPP, particularly in Sindh. Already, Sindhi nationalist leaders, including Mumtaz Ali Bhutto, are talking of a massive campaign against the Government. Clearly, the new Government, dominated by the Punjabis, will find it inconvenient to be tough in Sindh. The other sensitive issue is the Shariat Bill. While the Jamaat wants it passed—which could upset many alliance constituents and the country's 25 per cent or so Shias—Nawaz Sharif says he would like it passed with amendments. Whatever form the legislation takes, the IJI could cause sectarian strife.

Apart from internal problems, across the subcontinental divide too ominous signals were being read in the rabidly anti-India content of the electioneering rhetoric. Indian foreign policy makers believe that even though there was widespread anger against the PPP over corruption charges, the IJI's victory is mainly attributable to its clever exploitation of foreign policy issues. While no one in the electorate had much time for the charges that Benazir slowed down the pace of *Jehad* in Afghanistan, there was considerable support for the charges that she failed to push India adequately on the Kashmir issue and that she and her mother, Nusrat, were somehow responsible for the sudden cut of the US aid before the elections. The IJI made a tactical move by adopting a cautious but defiant stance on the US aid issue to capitalise on the ever-present anti-American feeling.

On India, and particularly Kashmir, the IJI chargesheet was endless: that Benazir's government passed on secret information on intelligence operatives in Punjab and Kashmir to India, that in the post-SAARC summit euphoria she more or less conceded



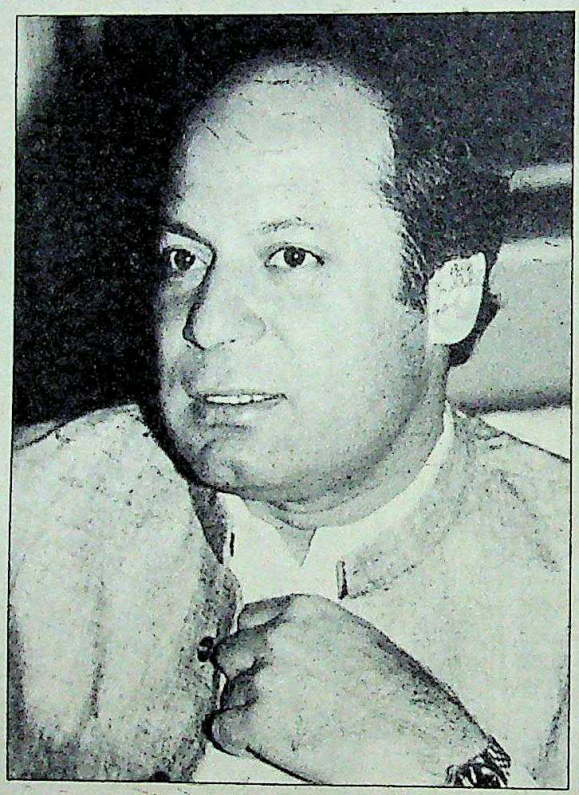
The military-bureaucracy combine have turned into inheritors overnight

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Indian hold on Kashmir, that in the guise of Rajiv Gandhi's securitymen she allowed Indian agents to look into every nook and corner of Rawalpindi's Chaklala airport, that her brother Murtaza's militant organisation, Al Zulfiqar, is trained and financed by India and so on.

But the problem with electoral innuendo is that once it translates into victory it can hold the victor hostage. That, Indian analysts fear, may be the case with the IJI despite the firm statements of friendship and peace by Nawaz Sharif and other IJI leaders. Even if saner elements in the IJI attempt to distance themselves from electoral rhetoric they will be pushed into it by the Jamaat-e-Islami whose presence in the ruling coalition is compared with that of the BJP in the National Front Government in India. The only difference is, the Jamaat is a lot more fanatical than the BJP and is openly committed to supporting so-called *Jehad* in Afghanistan as well as Kashmir. The future of relations between India and Pakistan will, therefore, hinge on the IJI leaders' ability to deal with the pressures from Jamaat



MIAN NAWAZ SHARIF

"I am not a fundamentalist

IF chosen prime minister, Mian Nawaz Sharif, 42, will be the first corporate tycoon-turned-national leader in the subcontinent. Nurtured by Zia-ul-Haq, Sharif, the president of the IJI, has emerged as the main anti-Bhutto leader. As the results of the elections trickled in, Nawaz found time to talk to Features Editor SHEKHAR GUPTA *for more than two hours. Excerpts:*

Q. *Did you win because of rigging?*

A. Absolutely wrong. It was, in fact, the PPP that introduced rigging in 1977. Everyone knows what punishment Bhutto was awarded for that.

Q. *Why was this election campaign so bitter?*

A. Perhaps we were all too emotional. I think what Pakistan needs is two or three more elections so that people learn to take things easy a bit.

Q. *Should India worry about your win?*

A. India should have no worries at all. We are friends of India and we want peace. But we also realise the need to sort out some pending issues. Today we are spending too much of our scarce money on arms. This should stop. India should also forget about Partition now as Pakistan is a reality. I also want to state firmly that we stand for a progressive and modern Pakistan. I am not a fundamentalist. Nor am I under the influence of fundamentalists.

Q. *But when Benazir tried to break the ice, you accused her of sacrificing Pakistan's interests.*

A. What happened in that phase was lip-service. Foreign policy was over-personalised. We stand for solid moves towards friendship. I had so much sympathy for Rajiv. But some of it was lost with his statement that had he been a voter in Pakistan he would have voted for Benazir.

Q. *Are you optimistic about peace in the subcontinent?*

A. Indeed I am. Tension in the subcontinent should now be confined to the cricket field.

Q. *In your rallies you have been saying that if helping Indian Kashmiri activists is a crime you will commit that crime a hundred times.*

A. I am not talking of armed or financial help. I am only talking of moral and political help. But ultimately India also has to realise that it cannot go on in this manner in Kashmir by suppressing the people.

Q. *What about the Indian Punjab problem?*

A. I think what is happening in east Punjab is India's internal problem.

Q. *Will the cases against Benazir and her partymen continue?*

A. Frankly, I do not want that she should be disqualified. But I have no control over the courts.

Q. *But there are plenty of corruption charges against you too.*

A. If there was anything in them why didn't they find out in the 20 months when they used the entire government machinery against us?

Q. *Will your government be able to act independently of the army?*

A. I don't know why this debate goes on and on. We should give credit to the army for following the constitutional path. They have no designs to take over.

Q. *Will you accept the current constitutional arrangement or change it, particularly the Eighth Amendment which gives the President sweeping powers?*

A. I think the President and the prime minister can sit together and resolve their differences.

Q. *As a leader of a sovereign country don't you resent repeated US threats to stop aid unless you change domestic policies?*

A. I think the Americans should not be saying do this or do that or else we will stop aid.

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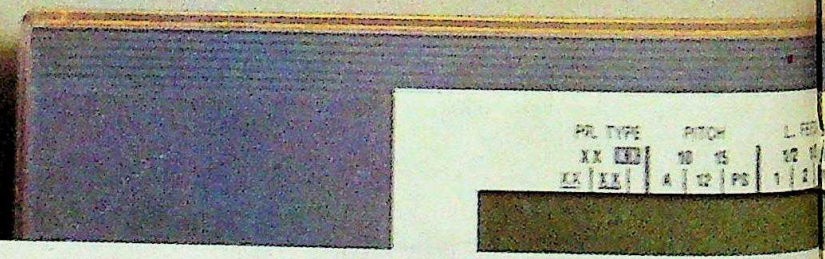
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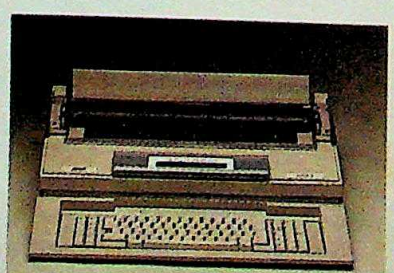




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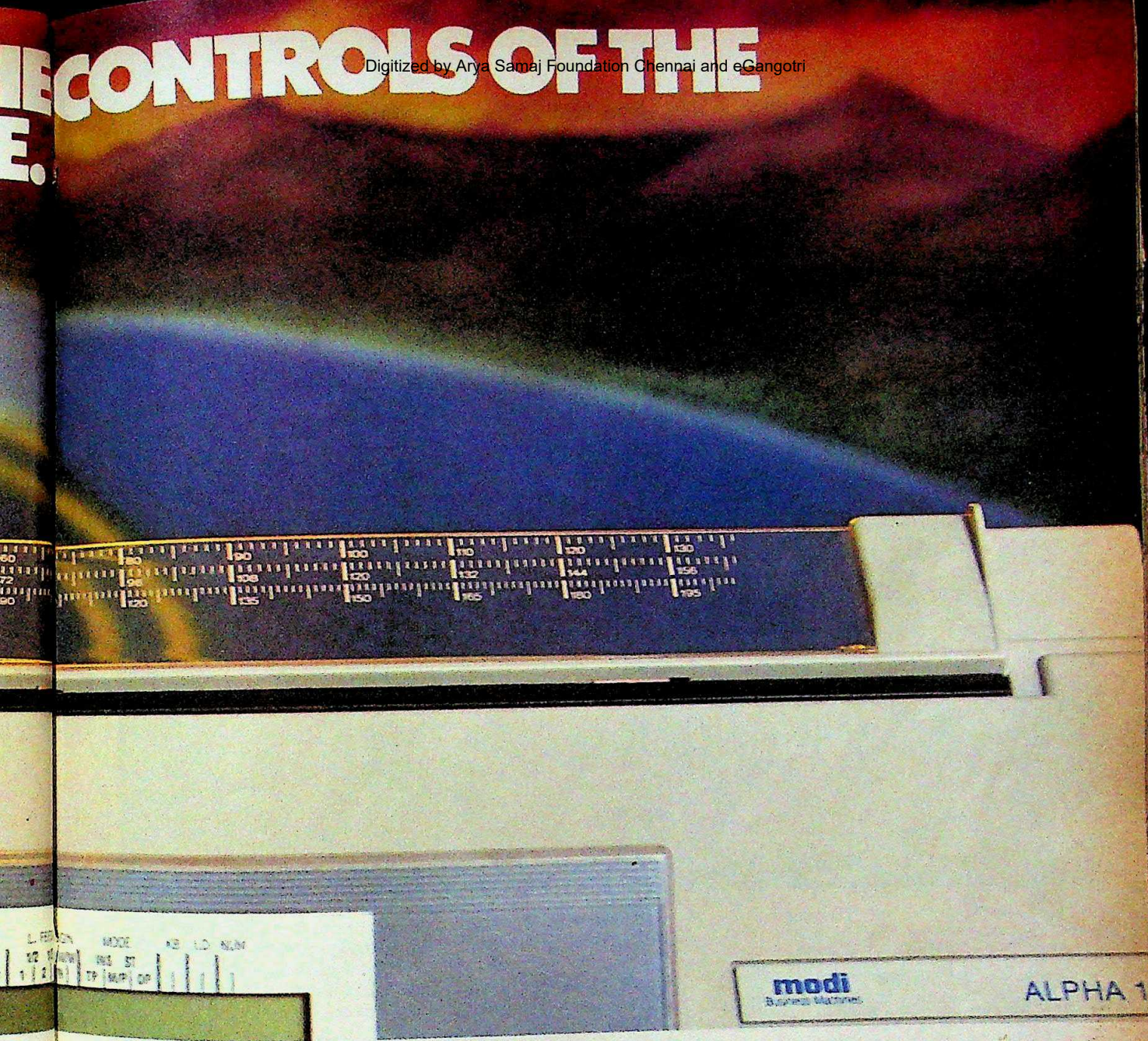
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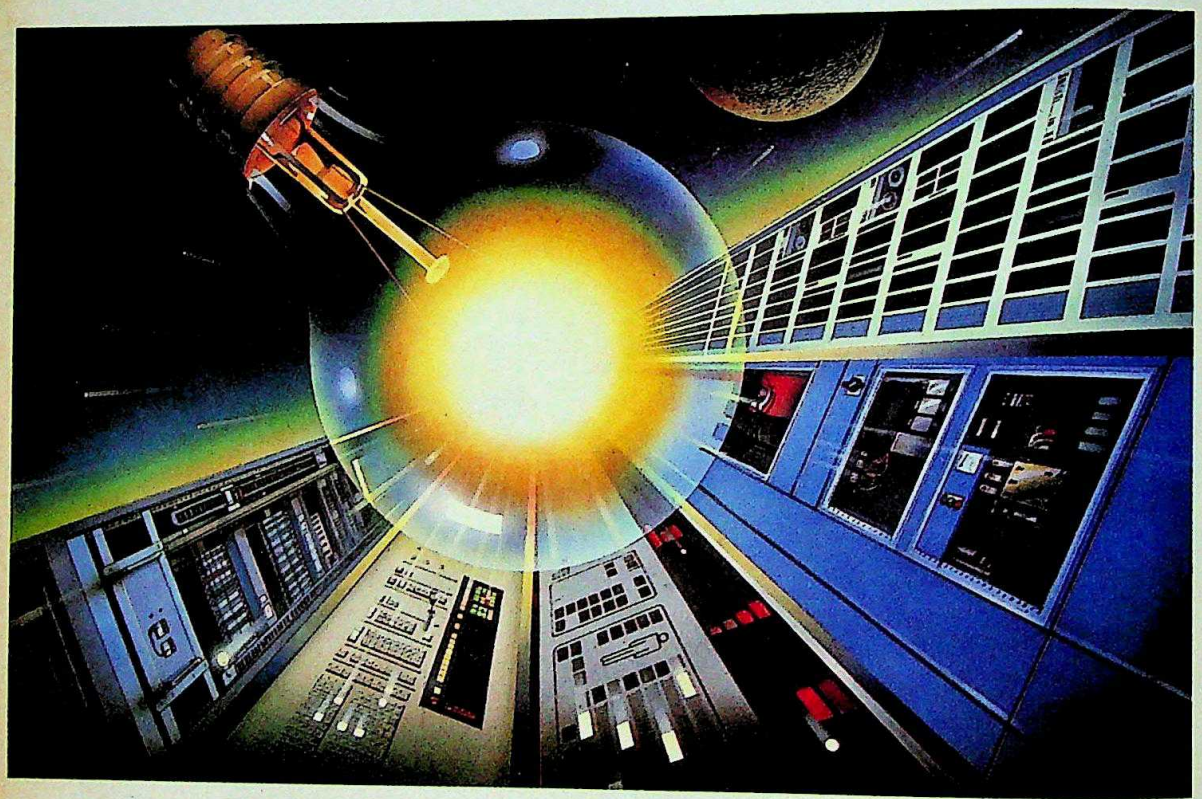
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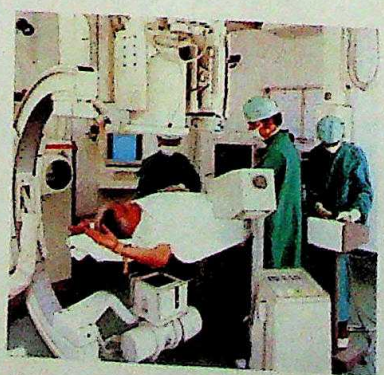
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and other fundamentalist elements.

The positive factor is that unlike in the past—especially during the heady days of Rajiv-Benazir bonhomie—when India had put all its eggs in the PPP basket, now Indian diplomats have been in regular communication with the IJI leaders. And there is also a feeling that it may indeed be possible to do business with the new Government. "It may be because your people hated Zia so much that they were in turn blinded by their love of Benazir. But for a whole year they failed to see who called the shots," said a senior Western diplomat.

That lesson is being relearnt in South Block now. Much as Indians may detest the army's hold on political power, it is a reality of Pakistani politics they have learnt to adjust to. To that extent an elected civil government which has the support of the army and the clergy may be in a better position to take policy decisions than the one that worked in conflict with Pakistan's power centres.

Privately, several significant IJI leaders express the wish that they want harmony with India. "Please tell your government they should cultivate solid friends in Pakistan. Not flaky ones like her," said a top IJI leader. There are many in the IJI who realise that while an anti-India stance was useful in the elections it can become a suicidal liability for a Pakistani government as increased tensions means increased army control over policy. And no leader, once elected, likes that. Indian calculations are that despite noises by the PPP, the new Pakistani Government will be reasonably stable and follow a policy more or less of the Zia days.

THE IJI election rhetoric has been no worse than Benazir's at the peak of the Kashmir crisis. However, no Indian initiatives are likely as the approach would be to watch the new Government's actions and then make policy moves.

What interests India most is the impact of the election on Pakistan's future politics. Much will depend on whether the establishment and the IJI opt for generosity in victory, or as many Bhutto-haters are suggesting, go for the kill. This could mean disqualification of the key PPP winners, including Benazir, on corruption charges, the passage of the Shariat Bill, perhaps even a law disqualifying women from high political office and then a wave of persecution.

Equally important will be the approach the PPP adopts. Benazir has already talked about "militant clamour" among her supporters in Punjab against rigging the poll. But the debate on whether to take the issue to the streets or not still rages on. There are many who counsel caution. "We should be patient. We should see what they throw on us and play each ball on its own merit," says former federal interior minister Aitzaz Ahsan. But as the days progress, the pressure on Benazir to "do something" will be tremendous as will the temptation on the victorious side to deliver the final blow. No surprise then that even after a supposedly clear verdict, the air is still thick with confrontation.



BENAZIR BHUTTO

"We will fight"

DEFYING a shattering defeat, Benazir travelled between Larkana, Karachi and Lahore two days after the election, rallying dispirited partymen. She spoke to the press at Lahore about her defeat and future plans.

On the credibility of elections: In the past we had military coup d'etats. Now we have an electoral one. They knew there was no defeating us unless they ran away with the ballot-boxes. Why is the IJI not celebrating? It's because even they're shocked by their victory, *unka to lottery nikal gaya* (it's a windfall for them).

On how she plans to protest: My heart bleeds for the people of Pakistan. They wanted democracy and they got this farce. But the overkill by the manipulators has helped us expose their nefarious designs and we are filing cases. For us this is like Karbala and we will fight like those historic figures of Karbala..

On who did the rigging: We have heard that there was an election rigging cell set up in the President's house. This is not a people's parliament; it is Ishaq's parliament. They fixed everything, including the defeats of their own men such as Khan Wali Khan. But I thank Ishaq for letting me win. I believe he said, don't rig Larkana, no one will ever accept that.

On methods of rigging: The entire administrative machinery was misused. En route to being delivered from polling stations to returning officers, the ballot-boxes were taken to the offices of deputy commissioners and subdivisional magistrates where they were replaced with pre-stuffed boxes. Most of the rigging was done after the polling, so obviously the foreign observers could not see it. In Asif's constituency, ghost votes were stamped by Murtaza Jatoi himself.

On why she refuses to concede defeat: The moral victory is ours. Despite the intimidation, millions came out to vote. But it is unfortunate the great people of Pakistan have been denied the right to determine their own destiny. They've been cheated by a bunch of crooks.

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RAJASTHAN

Parting Ways

Janata Dal withdraws support



FOLLOWING the Janata Dal's decision to sever all links with the BJP, only a minor miracle—or mundane political moves like defections—can save the Bhairon Singh Shekhawat Government in Rajasthan from collapse.

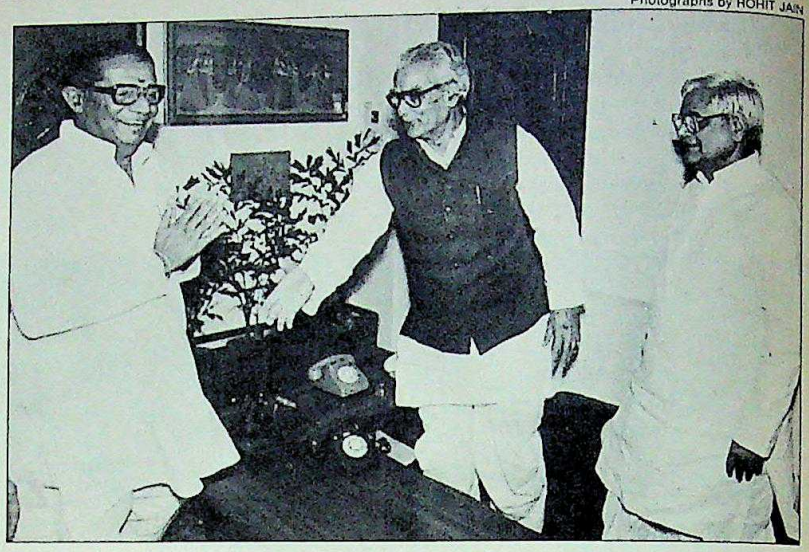
For the BJP has just 85 MLAs in the 200-member Assembly, 15 short of a simple majority. The Janata Dal, with 55 MLAs, is unlikely to change its stand in a hurry while the Congress(I), with 50 MLAs, has all along refused to have anything to do with the BJP—a sentiment reciprocated by the BJP.

Besides, the communal riots in the state—which claimed over 50 lives in Jaipur alone—that accompanied the Bharat Bandh called by the BJP to protest its President L.K. Advani's arrest, have resulted in the party being isolated even further. As almost all political parties blame the BJP for the violence, they are unlikely to come to Shekhawat's aid. The party's role during the riots was, in fact, one of the reasons for withdrawing support cited by Nathi Singh, leader of the Janata Dal's legislative group in Rajasthan, and Harjiram Burakh, the state unit president, in a letter to Governor D.P. Chattopadhyay.

But somewhat strangely, the Janata Dal is not pressing for the immediate dismissal of the Shekhawat Government. And nor has the governor set a date for Shekhawat to prove his majority on the floor of the House, the reason being that most BJP MLAs have left the state to take part in the Ayodhya *kar seva*. Meanwhile, Shekhawat is putting up a brave front, saying he will prove his majority when he is required to do so. Though chances of his scraping through are slender, a few partymen are pinning their hopes either on Shekhawat engineering the absence of many opposition MLAs on the day the confidence motion is moved in the House or on one-third of the Janata Dal MLAs defecting to the BJP.

Though this is at best a remote possibility, many Janata Dal and BJP ministers were, in fact, in favour of maintaining the status quo in the states despite the split at the Centre. But as far as the Janata Dal leadership was concerned, yesterday's ally had suddenly become its biggest foe. So much so, that while the Janata Dal parted ways with the BJP, an alliance with the Congress(I)—anathema till the other day—was not ruled out.

Photographs by ROHIT JAIN





Janata Dal ministers submitting their resignations; and large-scale arson

The Congress(I), however, is by no means averse to the idea of forging an alliance with the Janata Dal. Former chief minister Hari Deo Joshi expressed his party's readiness to consider cooperating with the Janata Dal. But PCC(I) chief Paras Ram Maderna demanded the impositon of President's Rule.

There were other conflicting signals. The Janata Dal's state unit president, for instance, said: "It would be wrong to ally with the Congress(I) as we had contested against that party." And about 12 Janata Dal members wrote to the governor asking him not to include their names in any possible coalition with the Congress(I). At the same time, over 18 Janata Dal MLAs have written to Nathi Singh asking him to seriously consider the possibility of forming a coalition with the Congress(I).

It appears unlikely that the BJP will figure in any of the permutations being worked out. But BJP leader Lalit Kishor Chaturvedi says he is confident that the party would win in any mid-term polls which he believes are imminent. His confidence—and that of his partymen—stems from the massive response to L.K. Advani's rath yatra when it passed through the state.

Cold shouldered by other political parties, the BJP will undoubtedly seek recourse in Ram—and make the Ayodhya dispute the main plank of its campaign to regain power in the state. This will only widen the rift between two communities, already polarised following the communal carnage in the state.

—SABA NAQVI BHAUMIK with bureau reports

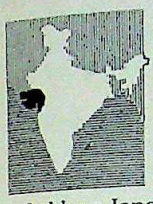
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GUJARAT

Snapped Ties

BJP retreat sparks crisis



THE denouement was swift—and inevitable. The withdrawal of support to the National Front Government by the BJP had its political backlash in Gujarat, ruled by a Janata Dal-BJP coalition.

Following the Janata Dal's decision to part ways with the BJP, Gujarat Chief Minister Chimanbhai Patel was asked to seek the resignations of all BJP members of his ministry. The BJP responded in kind; on October 26, its ministers led by Keshubhai Patel tended their resignations to the chief minister, then marched on to the residence of Governor Mahipal Singh Shastri, shouting slogans like "*Bharat mata ki jai*". There, they submitted a memorandum demanding Chimanbhai's resignation as his government was now reduced to a minority (the Dal has just 70 MLAs in a House of 181 while the BJP has 67). They also demanded the imposition of President's Rule in the state till the chief minister was able to prove his majority.

But the wily Chimanbhai had already pre-empted this move by meeting the governor earlier that morning and extracting an assurance that he would be allowed to continue till he proved his majority. Though the governor gave him 15 days, the Janata Dal promised to seek a vote of confidence on November 1.

The BJP was livid with the governor. Atal Behari Vajpayee, who rushed to Ahmedabad on October 27, accused Shastri of partisan behaviour for not consulting his party before he decided to allow Chimanbhai to continue. "We demand that the governor be recalled," announced Vajpayee. Keshubhai articulated the reason for the BJP's anger: "To allow Chimanbhai to continue is tantamount to giving him a chance to indulge in his penchant for horse-trading."

Such fears are not unwarranted as Chimanbhai has repeatedly demonstrated that he is a master of the game of political survival. Besides, simple arithmetic dictates that his government can't survive without resorting to some horse-trading. He needs the backing of at least 92 MLAs to prove a simple majority. Even if all the 12 independents join hands with the 70 Janata Dal MLAs, he still falls short of the coveted figure. So Chimanbhai cannot survive a confidence motion without the backing of the Congress(I)'s 32 MLAs.

Some key politicians claim that Chimanbhai has indeed been assured Congress(I) support. He is said to have established contact with the Congress(I) leadership through his former colleague, Maharashtra Chief Minister Sharad Pawar. But the Congress(I) is reportedly demanding its pound of flesh—in exchange for its support, the party is pressing Chimanbhai to ask the 11 Janata Dal MPs from Gujarat—eight of whom are staunch Chimanbhai loyalists—to come out openly against V.P. Singh. Though he denies seeking Congress(I) backing, Chimanbhai says: "If some people decide to support us on their own, we won't spurn it."

Clearly it is touch and go for the Janata Dal in Gujarat. Should Chimanbhai indeed survive he would have done so only by compromising with the Congress(I), for in politics, support only comes at a price.

But this time round, even the people of Gujarat are paying the price for the squabbles of the politicians. The BJP-sponsored Bharat Bandh last week once again unleashed the communal monster on Ahmedabad and other towns in the state. Following the violence which claimed at least eight lives besides damaging property worth crores, curfew was clamped on Ahmedabad, Palanpur, Deesa and Jamnagar.

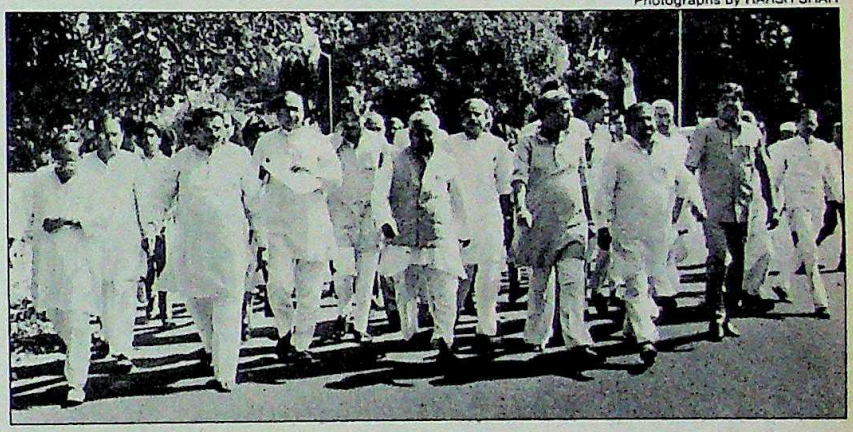
Worst hit was Ahmedabad, which must rate as one of the most inflammable towns in the country. The hatred—nurtured in recent years by the state's politicians—finally spilled out into the streets after a BJP sympathiser was stabbed by some Muslims on the day of the bandh. Retaliation was brutal: mobs stalked the streets singling out to loot, damage and burn, property belonging to Muslims.

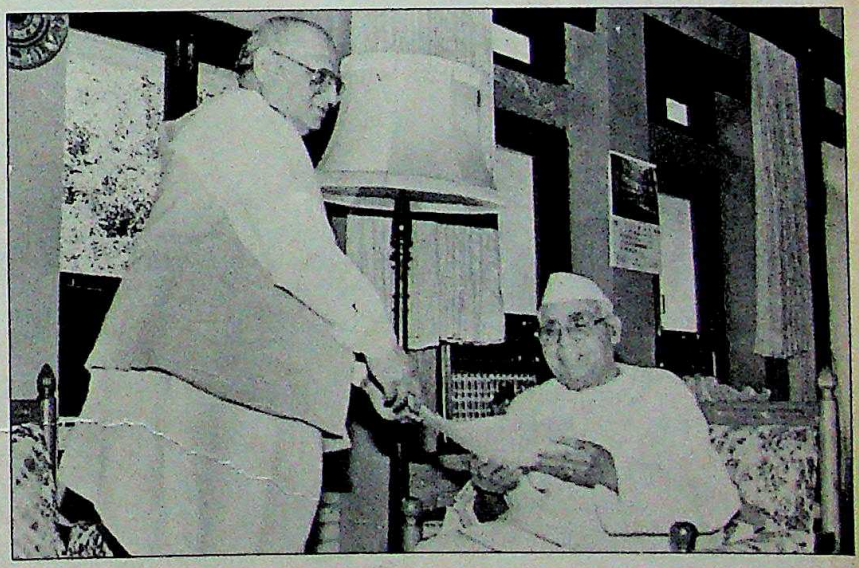
Thus, whatever happens on November 1, the inevitable sequel will be acute political instability. For a state reeling under communal tension, the combination could prove disastrous.

—UDAY MAHURKAR

BJP MLAs going to meet the governor; and Chimanbhai forwards resignations

Photographs by HARSH SHAH





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KARNATAKA

Return of the Rebel

Bangarappa settles in, to tall expectations



THE rebel of Karnataka politics has finally joined the establishment. The political life of Sarekoppa Bangarappa, 57—who became chief minister on October 17—has been characterised by a firm refusal to conform. And when he proved his majority in the House on October 25—supported by the whole Congress(I) contingent and five independents—he had reached yet another crest of the roller-coaster ride that his career has been.

If he was formally anointed chief minister with much hoopla, his election was not all that smooth. At its first meeting on October 12, the Congress Legislature Party (CLP) decided it wanted Rajiv to appoint a leader while observers from the AICC(I) insisted that a leader be elected. Bangarappa could boast of 80 supporters—way ahead of his rivals.

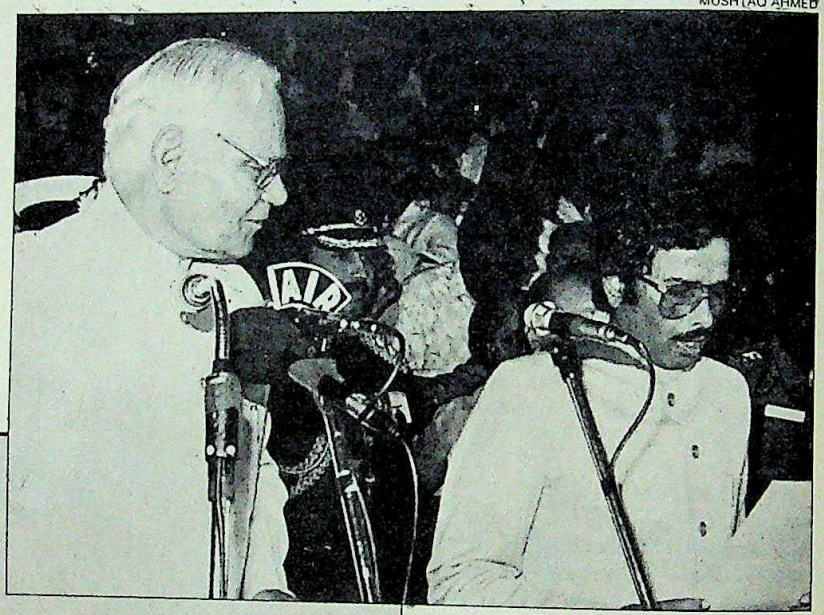
For the backward castes, his appointment is historic. Bangarappa is the state's first chief minister to come from the backward caste of toddy-trappers, the Idiga, although his own family background is that of middle class agriculturists. "He has personal knowledge of their problems, but has not done much for them in the past. No chief minister can survive without their support," says Dr S. Bheemappa, President of the Karnataka Backward Classes Federation.

Bangarappa's main problem will be managing a balancing act whereby he will retain the support of the Lingayat and Vokkaliga communities, while at the same time showing total loyalty to the Congress(I) high command. This may not be easy. Basavaraj Rayareddy, chief whip of the Opposition in the Assembly, says: "A feeling has been gaining strength in the northern part of the state where Lingayats are concentrated that the Congress(I) is anti-Lingayat."

For the moment, the high command seems to be calling the shots. All the six cabinet ministers so far are its nominees.

The new chief minister's closeness to leaders of the toddy-tapping community has raised suspicions that he will be soft on the liquor lobby. But Gopala Mukund Kanade, Congress(I) MLA disagrees: "Bangarappa would not have hit out at Ramakrishna Hegde in the Assembly for allowing liquor companies to indulge in rampant evasion of excise duty if he had been soft on the liquor lobby." Bangarappa himself denies all such

MUSHTAQ AHMED



Bangarappa (right) being sworn in

S. BANGARAPPA

"I have total faith in Rajiv"

NO matter how busy his schedule, Karnataka Chief Minister S. Bangarappa, 57, exercises every morning before driving off to play badminton. Before one such work-out last fortnight, the first chief minister of the state belonging to a backward class spoke to Senior Correspondent C.B. YESHVANTH KUMAR. *Excerpts:*

Q. *What are your priorities?*

A. Developmental activities with particular attention to irrigation, power, industry and agriculture. The second priority will be the upliftment of the sections living below the poverty line, and protection to minorities, SCs, STs and the weaker sections.

Q. *Are you choosing the ministers yourself?*

A. I shall form the ministry strictly according to Rajiv Gandhi's directions. I will seek his guidance for everything.

Q. *Does that mean you are a Rajiv Gandhi loyalist?*

A. Why not? I have total faith in him. That's the system in the party. That is why I went to Hyderabad to get his consent for forming my cabinet.

Q. *What is more important to you, the party or the party president?*

A. Both are one and the same.

Q. *But you have been known as a rebel in the party.*

A. That image was created by the press. I have never been like that.

Q. *Were you not twice deprived of chief ministership?*

A. Opportunities were there but I never felt I was deprived of them.

Q. *People fear that you will favour the excise lobby.*

A. Why don't you ask about the commercial taxes lobby which is more powerful than the excise lobby? But I will not favour anyone.

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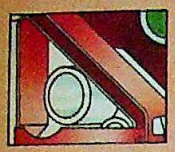
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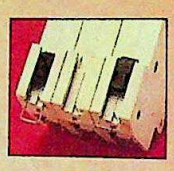
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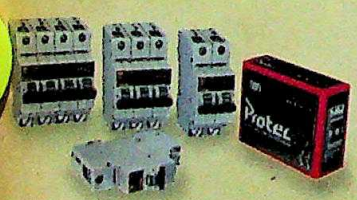


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allegations: "I have no connection with any lobby—liquor or otherwise. I will handle all of them firmly."

Trying to get out of the stranglehold of the high command will be a tough task for him. And he will also have to live down his habit of rebelling at the slightest pretext. From the time when he first won a seat in the sleepy Soraba constituency (which he's represented for 27 years) on the Samyukta Socialist Party ticket, he has made many a political somersault including leaving the Congress(I) twice and once forming his own party.

His reputation for affinity with the poor has lasted. At the swearing-in ceremony on the steps of the Vidhana Soudha—the secretariat in Bangalore—a handicapped man said: "I have never seen Bangarappa before. But I know he has sympathy for the poor."

Bangarappa occasionally portrays the 12th century social reformer Basaveshwara in plays. How much of a reformer he will be in his latest role, albeit in real life, will be watched with keen interest.

—C.B. YESHVANTH KUMAR

BOTTOMLINE BY D. BUNKER

Presidential Parley

For President Venkataraman, it's time to start earning his salary. Even with the serious oil crunch, nobody is going to grudge him the luxury of a few litres of midnight oil. Or, the sudden inflation in his telephone bill brought on by his long-distance calls to Sanjiva Reddy who tossed and turned on the horns of a similar dilemma back in 1977. With the activity at Rashtrapati Bhavan reaching fever-pitch, here's a peek behind the presidential purdah.

Presidential aide: Sir, the prime minister is here.

Venkataraman: Which one?

Aide: V.P. Singh, sir.

Venkataraman: Oh no! I hate those moral lectures. They're bad for the Constitution. I wish he'd save them for Doordarshan. Even my Zail Singh jokes fall flat when he's around. Can't imagine why. Rajiv seemed to enjoy them.

V.P.: *(entering solemnly)* My fellow countryman. The nation is passing through its darkest hour. The fate of 800 million people is in your hands. Yours is a heavy responsibility....

Venkataraman: Talking about heavy responsibility, have you heard the one about Zail Singh....

V.P.: It is not my seat that is important. I am willing to resign for the greater good of....

Venkataraman: *(hastily)* Promise?

V.P.: *(ignoring the interruption)*...but I am not willing to resign on a moral issue. I have saved the country from disaster. I came to tell you that I'll walk alone. There is no threat to my government.

Venkataraman: But you have lost the support of the BJP. And what about the people? Have you seen the bumper stickers? My grandson showed me one that says ....

V.P.: *(sternly)* The OBC's don't have bumpers. My concern is for the poor and downtrodden. I ask you for your trust and support. Together we can build a better future for....

Venkataraman: That sob stuff is fine for Doordarshan. What we have here is a crisis of leadership.

V.P.: I agree. Rajiv Gandhi, Advani and the rest of them are not fit to rule this country.

Venkataraman: But the issue is you and your leadership.

V.P.: I am not the issue. I have said so many times before....

Venkataraman: A bit too often, in my opinion.

V.P.: ...the issue is a moral one. If you think my action on Advani's yatra was morally wrong, you can have my resignation right now.

Venkataraman: *(resignedly)* Not again. Look. Nobody is questioning your decision on the yatra. There are larger issues at stake here.

V.P.: What can be larger than saving the country. I've saved the Muslims and also the backwards....

Venkataraman: Yes. For yourself. The point is that it is your popularity that is slipping backwards. How can I support you? It's a moral issue after all, as you keep reminding me.

V.P.: In any case, you can't let me go now.

Venkataraman: Why not?

V.P.: Simple. Vinod Pande's astrological prediction about my survival still has nine months to run.

Venkataraman: That reminds me. I have to run. I have another important visitor waiting.

V.P.: Who could be more important than me?

Venkataraman: My own astrologer.

Cartoon by JAYANTO



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MADHYA PRADESH

Patching Up

Joshi joins the Cabinet



WHEN he ruled the state during the Emergency, he did not create much of a reputation as an administrator. Not that Kailash Joshi committed unforgivable blunders. In fact, he did not do anything. Confronted with the awesome burden of being chief minister, Joshi developed a strange psychosomatic problem and slept for long hours as the files piled up.

So it was not much of a surprise that when the BJP came to power in the state once again, early this year, the party leadership overlooked Joshi's claim for chief ministership and appointed his arch-rival Sunderlal Patwa instead. This time Joshi did not slumber. He sulked.

Finally last fortnight, Joshi gave in to seven months of cajoling and bullying and joined the Patwa Cabinet. But not before he had sent a clear message that he was not to be played around with."I thought that my persistent refusal to join the Cabinet would harm the party's image," said Joshi.

The Patwa-Joshi rift was there for all to see. Joshi had even refused to listen to party President L.K. Advani who summoned him to Delhi once to coax him to join the ministry. Atal Behari Vajpayee had even proposed a way out by suggesting a programme implementation committee headed by Joshi. When Joshi finally agreed to join the Cabinet, there was a sigh of relief. "It will put a stop to all the malicious gossip about differences in the party," said the chief minister.

The fact that Joshi relented is a victory for Patwa and is bound to strengthen the chief minister's position in the party. Joshi, who has an incredible reputation for integrity and honesty, is much admired by the party cadre. That's why the party leadership was much worried by his refusal to join the Cabinet. Joshi even kept away from the last session of the Assembly and was gradually emerging as a rallying point for all Patwa detractors.

The chief minister has during the last seven months managed to make all his detractors bite the dust. But Joshi could still prove a tough match.

—N.K.SINGH

Cry, Beloved Country

INSIDE EYE BY INDERJIT BADHWAR

THERE he was, framed against the usual lopsided camera angle, doleful, his voice barely rising above a whisper, the eyes and thick-rimmed glasses blurring, trying to save the country. V.P. Singh's televised address to the nation on October 22 was supposed to be a tear-jerker. An exercise in political abnegation. The poet-politician wearing his heart on his sleeve.

It evoked not the lump in the throat but a dizzying series of mental juxtapositions that left you cold and pained. Cold, because he sounded like a jaded thespian reciting lines without conviction. Pained because his tears, if there were any, were flowing a little too late.

The country was prepared to cry with him many, many months ago when he went to Punjab and proclaimed that the blood in that region of torment would be washed away by the tears of those who cared. But somewhere down the road the caring and compassion disappeared and Singh appeared to harden his heart for the wages of political advantage.

His speech was his first public broadside against the BJP and the Rath Yatra. "If there's a choice between saving the Government and saving the nation," he intoned, "I'll choose the latter." Brave, fighting words. The court's verdict on the Babri Masjid dispute must be upheld at all costs, he pledged. The secular resolve would have been touching at any other time.

But that day it summoned images of another sort of the casteist fragmentation of the country which he so ruthlessly engineered. The questions came fast and furious. If he had tears then why did he not prepare to shed them when children across the country were burning themselves? Did not the nation need saving then? If he is so solicitous of upholding the decisions of the judiciary, why then did he threaten that no court verdict would be allowed to stand in the path of his Mandal Commission decision?

Illustration by PRANAB DUTTA



India is a temple constructed from the hearts of her people, he said. A demolished shrine made of bricks can always be reconstructed, he told us. But when the temple of hearts is destroyed, no one can put it together again, he whispered. We were supposed to reach for our handkerchiefs.

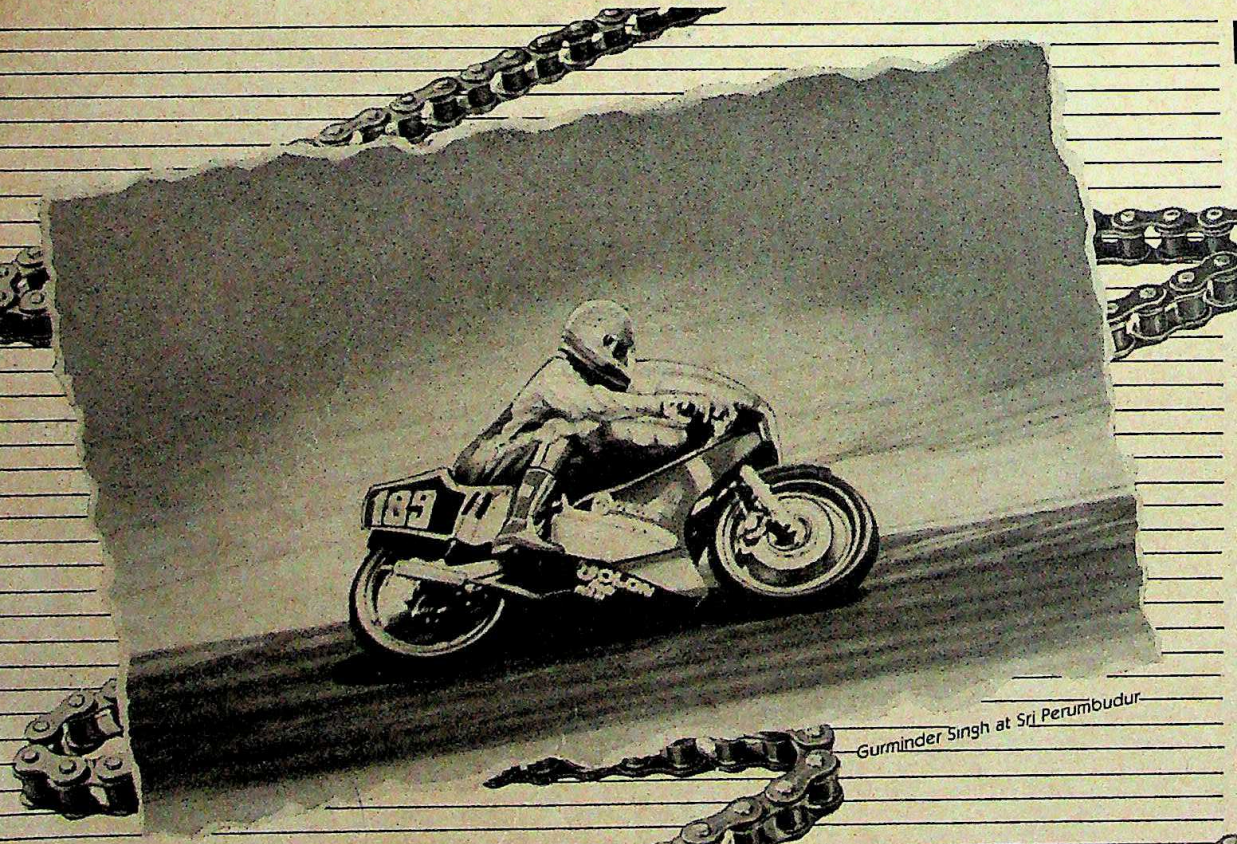
Instead, we harkened back to the prime minister's recent "harmony" rally in Patna. There, with the prime minister sitting approvingly next to him, Textiles Minister Sharad Yadav made a bloodthirsty appeal to the audience to "crush" the BJP Rath with the might of the Janata Dal's chakra while other ministers preached caste violence against anti-reservationists. And immediately afterwards, in a grotesque transition, Singh recited the same hearts-and-temple lines that he was to use again on Doordarshan. Hyde calls for divisive confrontations. Jekyll wants to mend hearts.

Singh's final denunciation of the BJP's chariot, no matter how correct, somehow failed to convey the sincerity of principle. He seemed like a man in a glass house throwing stones. For Singh's vote bank politics is equally condemnable. He ducked the issue for 10 months trying to appease the BJP while also flirting with Muslim fundamentalist leaders.

The people waited in vain for decisive leadership. To be taken into confidence by the man in whom they had reposed their hopes. What they got instead, after the nation lay fractured and wounded, was a dose of rehearsed sentimentality on their television screens.

Will the real heart-breaker please stand up?

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Gurminder Singh at Sri Perumbudur

People who make bikes and people who race bikes insist on

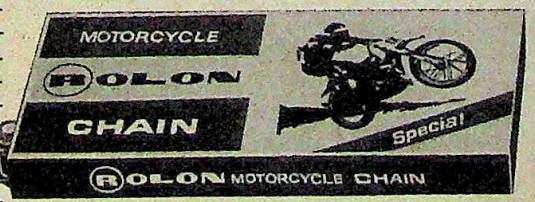
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Akshara Kala Yatra: innovative style

ANDHRA PRADESH

Literacy Drive

Education campaign begins



YATRAS seem to have become the order of the day. Even as BJP President L.K. Advani's saffron-bedecked chariot rolled through the north, there was another yatra on in the south. But with a difference. Unlike the northern caravan, the Akshara Kala Yatra is designed not to spread the message of religion but that of literacy.

As the pilot van of the yatra trundles through the dusty hamlets of Andhra Pradesh, its hour-long programme of songs set to folk tunes arouse the curiosity of the people. Another van with a team of volunteers follows with a 90-minute show of songs and street plays with themes like health, child care, environmental protection, literacy and national integration. It includes a 45-minute video film on immunisation produced by UNICEF with a message from the Urvasi award winning actress Sarada.

This unique show on the streets, which took off on October 2, Mahatma Gandhi's birthday, will have its grand finale on November 14, Pandit Nehru's birthday. Launched from all district headquarters, the 45 day road show consists of 23 convoys and will be performing in over 120 towns and villages. Says the state's Minister for Secondary Education Dr J. Geetha Reddy: "This is the biggest effort ever made to create awareness in the crusade against illiteracy."

Though a daunting task, since 20 of the 23 districts through which the yatra will pass are below the national literacy average, the programme has a successful role model: the Kerala Rashtra Sahitya Parishad's literacy campaign which made Ernakulam the first district to achieve 100 per cent literacy in the country. In fact, the Akshara Yatra is also the brainchild of Dr M.P. Parmeswaran, the man behind the Ernakulam experiment.

Encouraged by the initial success, Parmeswaran took up the issue of launching a literacy campaign on a national scale with the Government. Said he: "We want literacy to spread like an epidemic and kill ignorance." A start has been made with the Bharat Gyan Vigyan Samiti (BGVS)—with eminent educationist Dr Malcolm Adiseshaiah as chairman and Parmeswaran as secretary—taking up a massive literacy campaign in 500 districts across the country.

Meanwhile, the yatra in Andhra Pradesh is moving along with its band of volunteers who have taken time off from their work as teachers, government office clerks, stage artistes and farmers. As far as possible they try and relate the education with the environment. As BGVS state committee Secretary V. Lakshmana Reddy explained: "We have used the beat and rhythm of local folk forms to help the audience learn the Telugu alphabet."

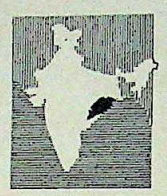
Clearly, this yatra is moving to a beat quite distinct from those in the north.

—AMARNATH K. MENON

ORISSA

Tough Act

Special courts are set up



IT is being billed as the nastiest bout yet in the unending battle between the two Patnaiks. The passage of the bill empowering the Orissa Government to set up special courts for speedy trials of corruption cases against politicians and top officials, indicates that Chief Minister Biju Patnaik is going all out to nail his predecessor and namesake—J.B. Patnaik.

The legislation, passed by the House after an 11-hour marathon debate spread over two days, gives the Government sweeping powers. Besides the special courts—presided over by high court judges—which would speedily dispose of cases recommended by the state Government, the Act also allows confiscation of illegally amassed wealth by an authorised officer not below the rank of district judge. A significant clause lays down that "where the state Government has reason to believe that any person has committed the offence, the Government may, whether or not the special court has taken cognisance of the offence, authorise the public prosecutor for making an application to the authorised officer for confiscation of the money or other property".

PRASHANT PANJIAR





J.B. Patnaik (left) and Biju Patnaik

This provision, coupled with the clause which states that appeals against judgements of the special courts can be entertained only before a division bench of the high court and cannot be taken to the Supreme Court, has caused many Congressmen to break out in a cold sweat. They are crying foul, dubbing the bill draconian and a tool for political vendetta. "Justice hurried is justice buried," says a

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DECOMMISSIONING OF NUCLEAR POWER PLANTS WITH CONCERN FOR PUBLIC SAFETY.

In every industry, permanent retiring of an operating plant, after its service life, is inevitable. This is called decommissioning. In case of nuclear power plants, because of radioactive elements present, guidelines and procedures for decommissioning are stipulated, much in advance of actual implementation. Resulting in national and international criteria for radiation protection, transport and waste disposal and environmental safety during various stages of decommissioning.

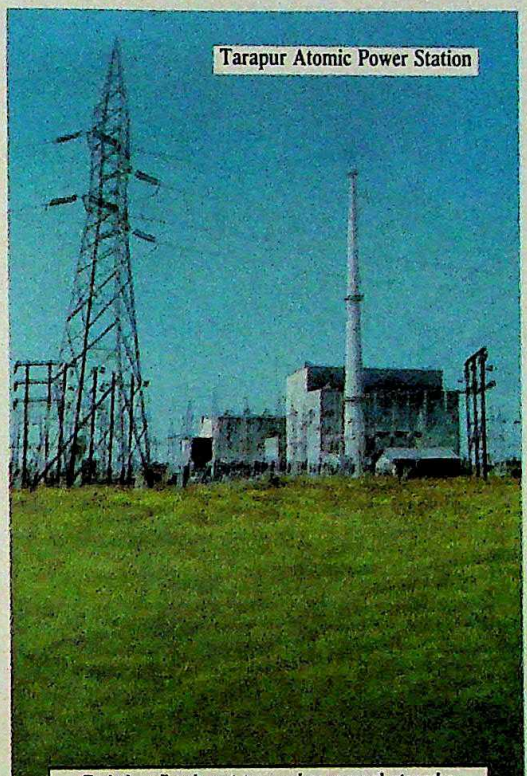
At the end of its operating life (30 to 40 years), a nuclear power plant contains some radioactive structures and worn out equipment. However, a major portion (over 85%) of the plant never becomes radioactive and can be demolished or reused without restriction. In the remaining 15%, after the spent fuel (containing 99% of the radioactivity) is taken out of the reactor and shifted off-site for disposal, only the reactor vessel and piping are of main concern; because of induced radioactivity, caused by neutron irradiation of structural metals, with their specific half-lives for radioactive decay. And secondly, because of the deposition of corrosion products on equipment surfaces, which can be decontaminated by chemical and mechanical processes.

Three stages of decommissioning nuclear power plants.

1. ***Storage with surveillance :*** This involves removal of all irradiated fuel, fuel coolant and other easily accessible radioactive material, leaving reactor vessel, structures and ventilation system intact, inside the containment building, under surveillance and control. This takes about two years.
2. ***Restricted site release :*** The radioactive reactor vessel and components are sealed off (entombed) for a dormant period of about 30 years for radioactivity to decay. Non-active areas are released for other uses.
3. ***Unrestricted site release :*** Major work of dismantling reactor vessel and piping is done with specialised remote handling techniques. The debris is then taken away, for permanent storage in steel-lined shallow land repositories, in locations duly approved by the Regulatory Body. The remaining areas of the plant are decontaminated and released for unrestricted occupancy (greenfield conditions). This takes about five years.

An alternative to the 3-stage decommissioning is "the prompt dismantling mode of decommissioning", which can be resorted to, if need be, to complete the job in about ten years. This comprises of stage-1 without storage, followed immediately by stage-3, but involves higher costs and man-rem exposure.

Since 1960, more than 65 reactors have been decommissioned the world over, and the accumulated experience shared by all the member countries of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).



Tarapur Atomic Power Station

Typical small scale prototype nuclear power plants under demonstrative decommissioning in some selected countries.

Country & Plant	Type	Capacity Net MWe	Commercial Operation	Current (Aug. 1985 Decommissioning Stage (Planned)
Canada				
Gentilly-1	BLW (Candu)	250	1972-80	1 (3)
Douglas Pt.	PHWR	206	1968-84	1
France				
EDF	GCR	70	1963-73	1 (3 in 93)
Germany				
MZFR	PHWR	52	1966-84	1 (2 in 84)
USA				
Dresden	BWR	200	1962-78	1
Indian Pt. (1)	PWR	257	1962-80	1 (3)
U.K.				
Windscale	AGR	28	1963-86	1 (3 in 87-93)

Some 100 large sized nuclear power plants will complete 30 years of commercial operation by 2000 A.D. Decommissioning will become a routine industrial activity, a decade from now.

Decommissioning costs have been estimated to be less than 2% of the total cost of generating electricity and man-rem exposures less than 0.1% of those caused by natural background radiation.

Decommissioning plans for Indian nuclear power plants.

The maintenance work carried out in radioactive areas during the last two decades at TAPS, RAPS & MAPS, the decommissioning of a test reactor at BARC, the refurbishing of the fuel reprocessing facility at Trombay and the participation of Indian scientists and engineers in evolving decommissioning codes and guides at IAEA, have provided broad-based experience and expertise. A dedicated group has specifically studied in depth, decommissioning pre-requisites and made detailed plans for Indian nuclear power plants.

TAPS will be the first plant ready for decommissioning by 2005 A.D. with RAPS & MAPS following in 2010 and 2020 A.D. Using the 3-stage decommissioning may take 40 to 50 years for each multi-unit plant. The concept of decommissioning and the concern for public safety demand a planned, deliberate delay of about 30 dormant years for radioactivity to decay, so as to derive adequate dividends by reduction in man-rem doses.

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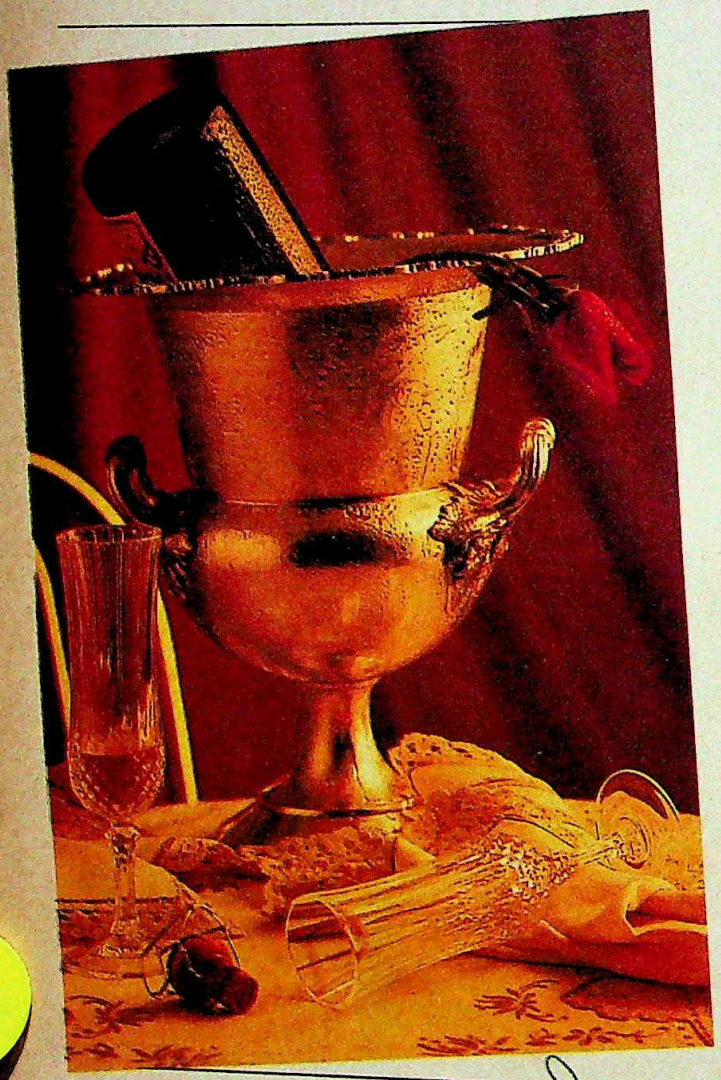
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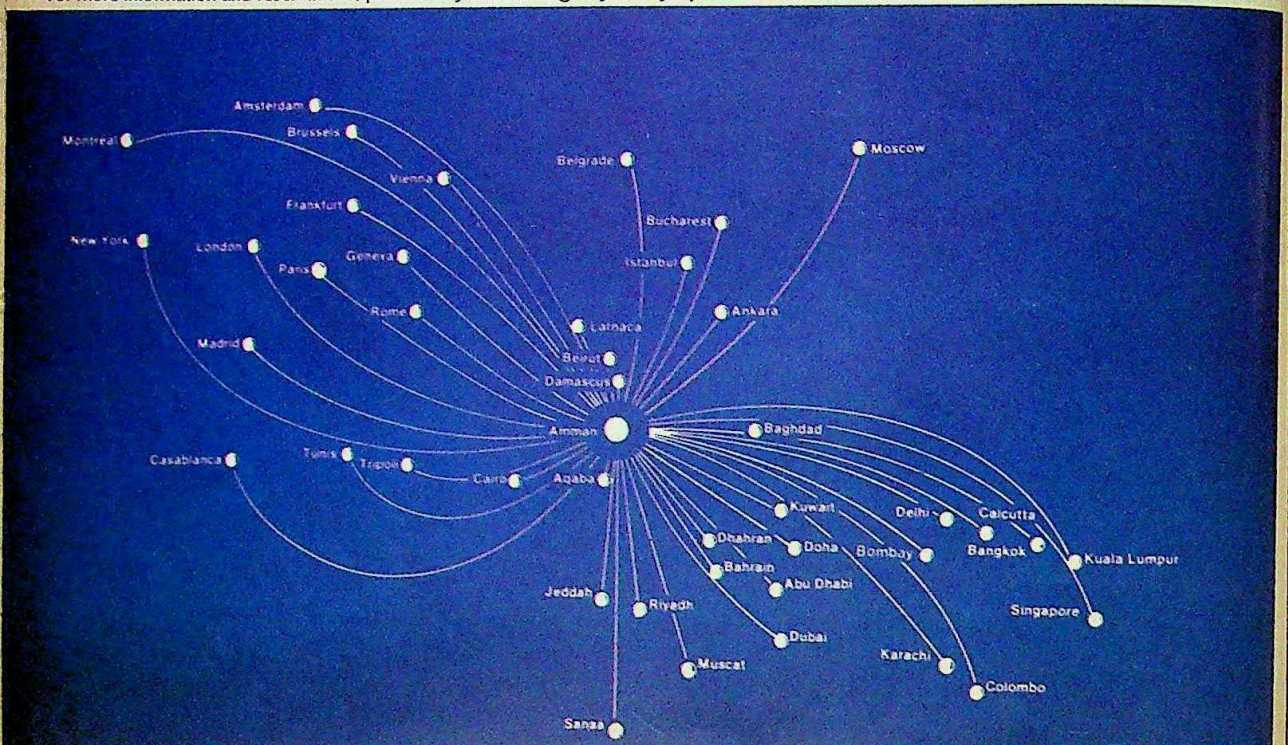
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J.B. Patnaik loyalist. राजभक्ति

Though the Act applies to all officials and politicians, only J.B. Patnaik and his men are likely to find themselves in the dock. In fact, the original text limited the bill's application only to those who held office between 1980 and 1989. Though the time frame was later dropped, the concluding paragraph of the Act makes it clear who the new law is intended for. "There is widespread feeling amongst the public at large that during the last 10 years, persons who held high political offices amassed huge wealth by adopting corrupt means," it states.

So far corruption charges have been filed against 64 persons—including J.B. Patnaik and seven of his former cabinet colleagues. Patnaik in particular appears to be in for a rough time. His attempt to portray himself as a persecuted man is failing as public resentment against the deposed Congress(I) ruler is yet to wane. Besides, dissidence within the Congress(I) means that the party will not put up a united front against this move: many Congress(I) politicians are in fact secretly delighted to see the ex-chief minister in a fix.

Interestingly, while the noose tightens around J.B. Patnaik's neck, the other Patnaik—whose stock has fallen sharply due to the Janata Dal's failure to deliver most of its election pledges—may be able to redeem his image somewhat by keeping his promise to catch crooked Congressmen.

—RUBEN BANERJEE

ORISSA

Wordy Duel

THE news from Orissa is that a media war is on. Trading punches in the ring are two ambitious, high-profile young men, who are freely using both pedigree, party, and the newspapers they own and edit, to fashion a knock-out punch. For long Tathagata Satpathy, Janata Dal MLA and son of Congress(I) stalwart Nandini Satpathy, had been at the receiving end. But for the last six months he has been doing the punching, while Soumya Ranjan Patnaik, son-in-law of former chief minister J.B. Patnaik, ducks and weaves desperately to stay in the ring.

The Oriya newspapers being used to trade blows are Soumya's *Sambad* and Tathagata's *Dharitri*. The scale of war can be gauged by the fact that Tathagata has launched a morning edition of *Dharitri*, which till last month was only an eveninger. In retaliation, Soumya has come out with an evening edition of *Sambad*. Now both papers are evenly matched—each one bringing out an evening and morning edition.





Tathagata and *Dharitri*: rising fortunes

The dailies are being used by Tathagata and Soumya in a virtual no-holds-barred war.



Soumya and *Sambad*: fading glory



What this means is that the intense rivalry between Tathagata and Soumya has now become a twice-a-day affair. In a veiled swipe at *Dharitri*, *Sambad* recently commented that newspapers masquerading as widely circulated ones are trying to corner government advertisements. *Dharitri* retorted by pointing out that people living in glass houses should refrain from throwing stones at others. The reference was to the fact that during J.B. Patnaik's tenure, *Sambad* was flush with state-sponsored advertisements.

The genesis of the rivalry between the two editors lies in the campaign Soumya had carried on against Tathagata before the last elections. The *Sambad* editor was angry that while Tathagata, a late entrant into politics, had managed to get a Janata Dal ticket for the assembly polls, Soumya despite being a Congress(I) office-bearer had been denied a ticket for both the Lok Sabha and assembly elections. Through a month-long front-page campaign in *Sambad*, Soumya proclaimed that Tathagata's poll prospects were bleak.

But not only did Tathagata win by a handsome margin, he has also gone on to expand his newspaper, driving Soumya into a corner. Says a veteran journalist: "While *Dharitri* was just an eveninger, Tathagata had no instrument to counter *Sambad*. Now he can take the battle onto the rival camp."

Sure enough, Soumya now finds himself at the receiving end. With the exit of his father-in-law from power, the steady inflow of advertisements has dried up. Worse, his office premises have been raided for tax evasions. Soumya had sought to colour the raid as an attempt to muzzle the free press. But *Dharitri* called the bluff, noting in an editorial that the arms of the law do not stop at the gates of a newspaper establishment. Recalling the raid on its own premises soon after Emergency, *Dharitri* wondered why Soumya's commitment to the free press was not in evidence then.

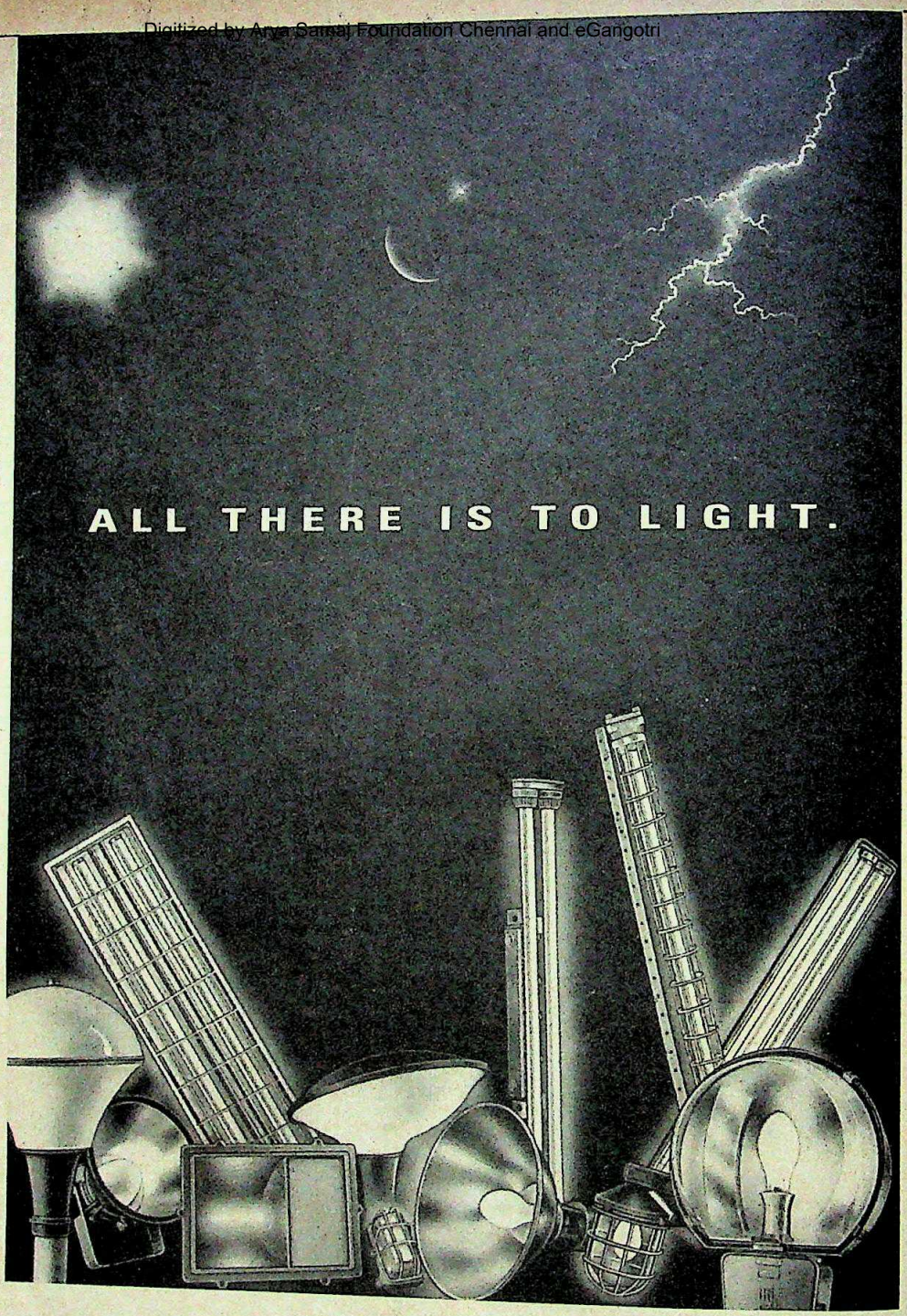
Undoubtedly Tathagata's rise has brought about a decline in Soumya's influence. During his father-in-law's reign, Soumya ruled the roost. But now, with his proximity to Biju Patnaik, it is Tathagata who is much sought after. And though the *Dharitri* editor claims, "I don't wish to step into anyone's shoes", it is clear he has ousted Soumya from his.—RUBEN BANERJEE

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PUNJAB

New Frictions

Officials, police lock horns



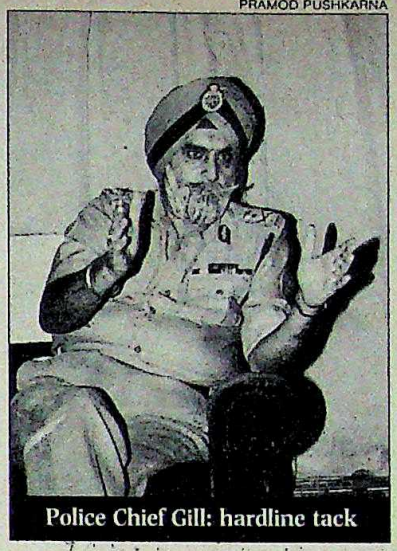
THE convulsions at the Centre have been steadily relegating Punjab to the back-burner. And though the state's destructive significance may have diminished in the public eye, the situation is deteriorating relentlessly.

The state of affairs shows an abject lack of policy direction and the inability to decide between a conciliatory and a hardline approach. The administration has reached a dangerous pass with the police and civilian wings working at cross-purposes.

Last fortnight one more unseemly row between the police and Home Department came to a head. The contentious issue involves the redressal of public grievances and inquiries into police excesses. Instances of police brutality had minimised during Nirmal Mukarji's tenure as governor, but have been mounting since. Governor Virendra Verma had ordered magisterial inquiries into three police encounters that occurred in June: the killing of two young men at Kotla Ajner, the shooting of a youth at Mohali, and the death of three others.

The complainants had alleged that all the killings were in fake encounters. The inquiries were, however, held up due to the intransigence of DGP K.P.S. Gill and the concerned district police chiefs. This had resulted in a showdown between Gill and the previous home secretary R.S. Mann. Now with the submission of two of the inquiry reports, the row has flared up again.

PRAMOD PUSHKARNA



Police Chief Gill: hardline tack

PRASHANT PANJIAR



Governor Verma: dispirited show

While in the Mohali incident, the magistrate has been unable to arrive at a conclusive verdict, in the Kotla Ajner case, the magistrate has held that the "death of the two was not in the ordinary course of an encounter". Consequently, Home Secretary A.S. Chadha and the Advisor P.S. Kohli have recommended registration of a criminal case against the concerned police officials. But Gill has protested that it may lead to demoralisation and insubordination in police ranks. Flummoxed, the governor has referred the case for legal advice.

This serious state of affairs springs from the total sense of uncertainty gripping the administration. No brief appears to have been spelled out for the present spell of President's Rule, and even a month after their announcement, the modalities of the economic package are yet to be worked out. The lack of direction from the Centre has widened the chasm between the police and the civil administration.

Senior officers feel that to stem the rot a total reshuffle, including a change of governor, is called for. Also a clear policy must be urgently spelled out. Else, the small benefits accruing from the economic package will be swept away by the escalating anarchy.

—KANWAR SANDHU

Fatal Strike

JUST as the ongoing anti-Mandal agitation appeared to be fizzling out in Chandigarh, the city was plunged into fresh turmoil. Violence assumed a macabre dimension as, in the first incident of its kind, suspected terrorists armed with AK-47 rifles gunned down anti-Mandal agitators sitting on a relay fast at two separate locations. The toll: six dead and 15 injured.

The people retaliated angrily by taking to the streets and burning half a dozen vehicles. The police, who were already geared up to deal with the anti-Mandal agitation, resorted to tear-gassing and lathi charge. And the situation deteriorated enough for the city to be placed under curfew and the army to be called out.

Not only were anti-V.P. Singh slogans raised at the Post Graduate Institute where the injured had been taken, but the city administration too came in for criticism for being unable to provide adequate security to peaceful demonstrators. This even though the self-styled Panthic Committee chief Dr Sohan Singh had announced that the committee supported the Dalits, and would deal firmly with anti-reservationists.

SWADESH TALWAR/Indian Express



Mass cremation of dharna victims

Certainly, the incident served as a gruesome reminder that the city's security set-up is in need of urgent shoring up. For clearly, Chandigarh seems to be moving from the fringes of terrorism to its near epicentre.

—KANWAR SANDHU

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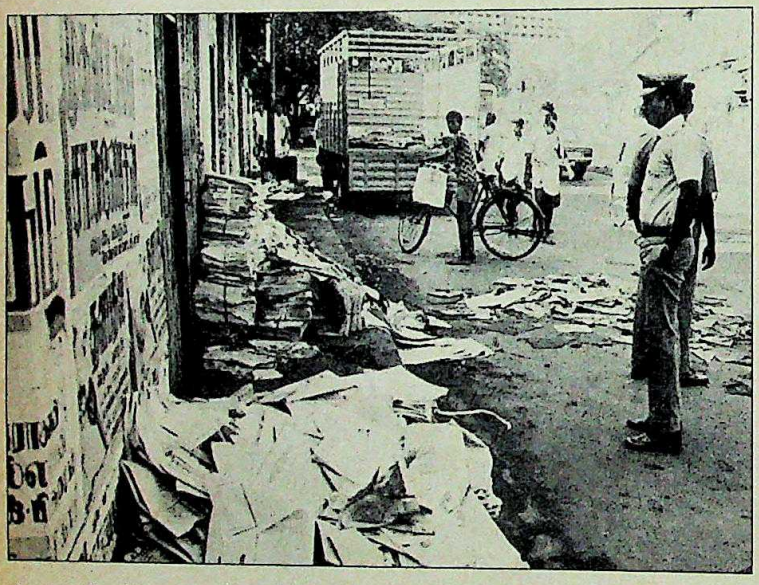
TAMIL NADU

Paper Wars

DMK-*Express* trade charges



THE battle between the DMK Government and the *Indian Express* in Tamil Nadu is hotting up. Quite literally. In the first week of October, volunteers belonging to the political wing of the Vanniar Sangam, Pattali Makkal Katchi (PMK), and Dravida Kazhagam (DK), waylaid *Express* vans and set alight several bundles of newspapers. Other burning incidents followed in the next few days, accompanied by the chanting of pro-Mandal and anti-Brahmin slogans—an extremely clear indication that the attack on the *Express* was because of the paper's strident anti-Mandal stance.



Express' waylaid van: violent turn

A strong-worded letter of complaint written by the executive director of the *Express* in Madurai to Chief Minister M. Karunanidhi, accused "powerful elements in the DMK" of trying to destroy the group's publications in the state. The most powerful element is, of course, the chief minister himself. The attack on the vans and burning of *Express* newspapers, in fact, became a daily ritual in the state immediately after a hard-hitting speech by Karunanidhi condemning the paper's anti-Mandal views and accusing it of exaggerating the extent of opposition to the reservation for Other Backward Castes.

One of the grievances expressed by the *Express'* Executive Director Manoj Kumar Sonthalia in his letter to the chief minister was that police officers who had been assigned to stop the violence had stood around doing absolutely nothing when the vans carrying the newspapers were attacked.

There were plenty of other allegations: that the state Government had deliberately withdrawn all advertising from the group; and that members of both the DK and PMK, both hardline pro-Mandal groups, were planning to attack the group's offices in Madras, Madurai and Coimbatore.

The chief minister was extremely prompt in his rebuttal of the allegations. "The *Indian Express* has taken on the role of a sharp weapon and a strong supporting base for those who are opposed to the channel of opportunity being opened by the Central Government to the backward classes," he angrily retorted.

As for withdrawing Government advertising from the Indian Express group, Karunanidhi claimed it had simply been a matter of economy applied equally to all newspapers. While there's currently a lull in the violence and vitriol, tension remains, particularly as many members of the Express group believe that the state Government softened its stand only after the Union Home Ministry finally put pressure on it to do so.

But with the *Express* adopting a defiant posture, it could well be the lull before the real storm.

—ANAND VISWANATHAN

KERALA

Riot Rocked

Maulvi's death causes havoc



THE south is usually free of communal violence. But the BJP-VHP-RSS campaign on the Ram Janmabhoomi issue has resulted in the virus spreading southwards: the first victim was Karnataka, and then last fortnight, communist-ruled Kerala. The bloodletting began with the murder of an innocent maulvi, A.V. Ali, in Trichur district. He was hacked to death, allegedly by RSS men, retaliating against an attack on two of their activists by Muslim youth. Following this incident, peaceful Kerala went up in flames: by October 19, six persons were killed, scores injured, and property worth lakhs burnt or looted in over three dozen clashes.

Worst hit was Mattancherry, a business centre in Ernakulam district. It was a dark Diwali for the over 450 Gujarati and Marwari families settled there. Instead of crackers, flames leapt into the sky as mobs went on the rampage for 11 hours, looting and then burning. The administration was clearly caught napping as despite prior warnings of tension, no police reinforcements were rushed in. The police defence was that as there were fears of violence throughout the state, its force was already overburdened.

In an unusual move the merchants of Mattancherry suggested that looters be given a chance to surrender goods without penal action. The police announced that looted goods could be deposited at specific spots on the roadside. The strategy worked as many utensils, electric appliances, TV sets and music systems were returned.

Still, this small gesture could not even begin to heal the wounds of those who lost their homes or family members in the wave of rioting that engulfed the state. While the maulvi's murder proved the last straw, Hindu-Muslim tension had been mounting for some time now—particularly as the BJP state President K. Raman Pillai took out a rath yatra in Kerala modelled on L.K. Advani's controversial journey.

As in other parts of the country, the people of Kerala were paying the price for the Hindu fundamentalists' heightened Ram Janmabhoomi campaign.

—RAMESH MENON

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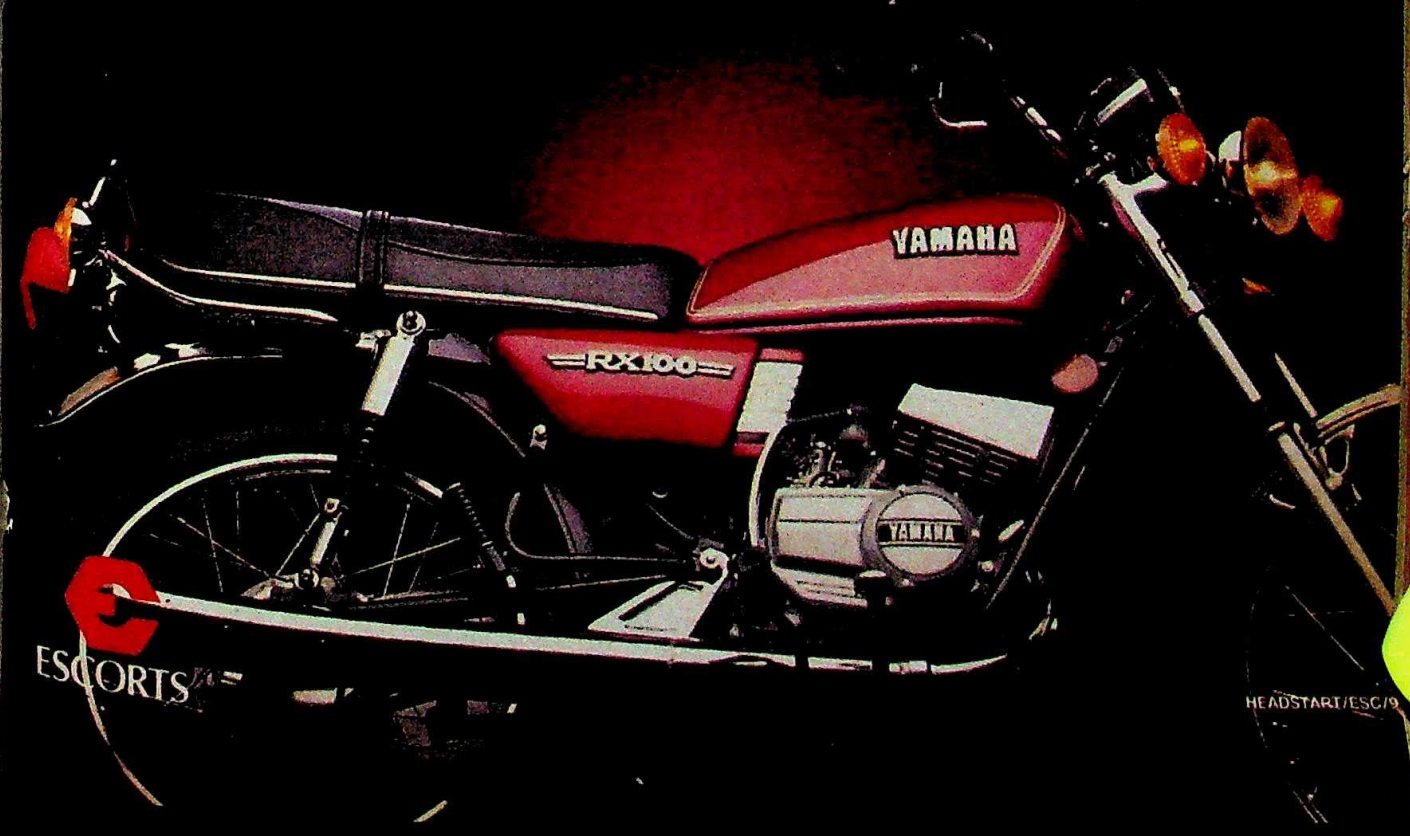
A MAN AND HIS PASSION

There's a magic in her touch that just comes shining through shes- the one who stole my heart a



YAMAHA

THE INTERNATIONAL FAVOURITE



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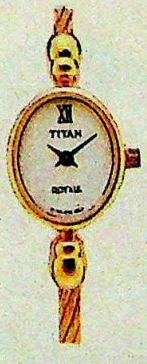


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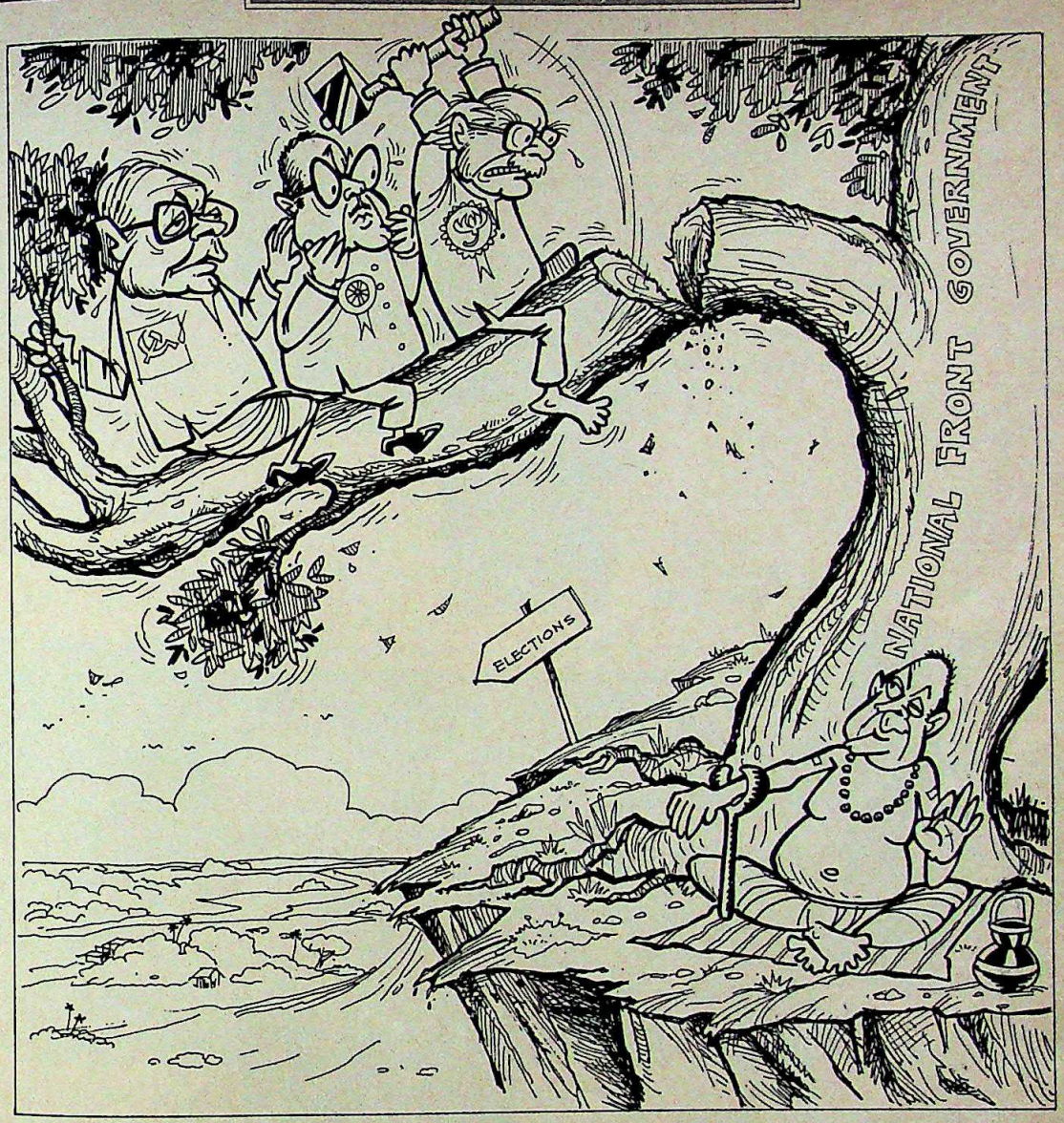
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SIGN POSTS

DIED: Om Shivpuri, 54, popular Hindi film actor, of a heart attack in Madras.

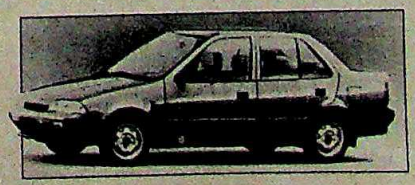


A versatile actor who specialised in character roles, Shivpuri featured in almost 100 films. He made his debut in Gulzar's *Koshish* in 1972 but by far his most memorable roles were in the box-office hits, *Namak Haram* and *Don*.

DIED: Captain W.A. Sangma, 71, former chief minister of Meghalaya, of lung cancer. An Indian Army officer during World War II, he switched to the political battlefield where his tactics earned him greater prominence.

ELECTED: India, to the UN Security Council for the sixth time since 1945. The two-year term beginning January next was virtually assured after Sri Lanka withdrew from the race.

LAUNCHED: Maruti-1000, the new status symbol on Indian roads. A sleek and roomy car, it will be available in two models—standard and air-conditioned. The price-tag: Rs 3.19 lakh and Rs 3.48 lakh respectively.



DIED: P.R. Sarkar, 69, the reclusive founder of the controversial Calcutta-based Ananda Marg sect. He leaves behind a global network of 'communities', modelled on what was called the 'Proutist' or progressive utilisation theory. His death, however, leaves a leadership vacuum that could cripple the organisation.



RETIRED: P.T. Usha, 26, one of Asia's finest women athletes, from professional competition. In her decade-long career, Usha bagged 22 gold, 19 silver and eight bronze medals including three silvers at the Beijing Asiad.

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WEST BENGAL

Light Jokes

● CHIEF Minister Jyoti Basu may have been able to hold the reins of political power for more than a decade in West Bengal. But the repeated power failures in his state have spawned a whole new genre of "load shedding jokes"—with the redoubtable leader as the obvious target.

Earlier Calcuttans used to hail the frequent power cuts with a tongue-in-cheek "Jyoti (light) has gone out". But as the exasperation has grown the jokes have become harsher. The latest joke doing the rounds is: while 'Jishu' (Jesus) led man-

BHAWAN SINGH



Basu: power play

kind from darkness to light, 'Basu' was leading the retreat into darkness.

And if that isn't biting enough there's yet another joke that has the chief minister taking his grandchildren on a conducted tour of the city. The grandchildren ask him if the magnificent Victoria Memorial was built by his government. A visibly embarrassed Basu confesses that it was built by the imperialists. The same goes for the Writer's Building, the seat of power. However, when the children experience the inevitable power cuts they need to ask no questions. Instead, they all exclaim in unison: "This, grandfather, has to be the handiwork of your government." Clearly, the people of West Bengal aren't amused any more.

MADHYA PRADESH

Playing the Religious Card

● LAST year the BJP met with phenomenal success at the hustings by playing the Ram card. Encouraged by that, Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Sunderlal Patwa decided to go a step further and use the Ram card again. Literally. This year he sent out more than 3,000 Diwali greeting cards, with elaborate sketches of Lord Ram made on them.





Diwali card; (inset) Patwa: militant tone

And the cards didn't carry just an innocuous 'Happy Diwali' message. They were, in fact, distinctly belligerent and revivalist in tone. For instance, one of them showed Ram holding a trident with a temple in the background. Another had him clad in battle gear and brandishing a bow and arrow.

That's not all. As the air is thick with militant rhetoric, the chief minister didn't just change from UNICEF cards to Ram cards. He even changed his greeting at public functions from a patriotic 'Jai Hind' to a religious 'Jai Shree Ram'. Though it still remains to be seen whether Patwa has played his cards right, for the moment one thing is clear: Ram Rajya couldn't be too far away.

TAMIL NADU

The Name Game

● THE name of the game in Indian politics seems to be flip-flop. And the man to have perfected the art is Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M. Karunanidhi. After his return to power last year, he said with considerable bravado that he didn't believe in resorting to cheap gimmicks to gain popularity. But those were famous last words. Just last fortnight, he had the name of the Small Industries Promotion Corporation of Tamil Nadu (Sipcot) changed to Sipcot industrial complex-Karunanidhi Nagar-Ranipet.

Sixteen years ago too the name of the Sipcot complex was changed to add his name to it. However, following snide remarks in the press he had had his name dropped. Earlier, he had even made a dig at MGR when he pointed

SHYAM TEKWANI



Karunanidhi: seeking glory

out how the MGR regime had renamed the post office at the complex—named after Karunanidhi then—in a bid to play down his image. "My image exists despite my 13 years in exile," he said, adding with another self-congratulatory flourish that his epitaph should state: "Here rests one who has worked ceaselessly."

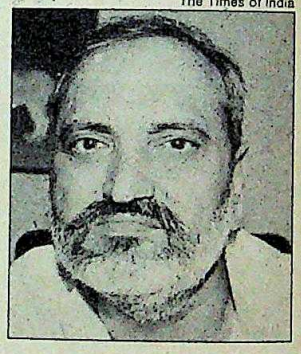
GUJARAT

Locking Horns

● WHILE the Government at the Centre teetered on the brink of collapse due to the Mandal issue, the seven-month-old Janata Dal-BJP combine in Gujarat didn't seem to be very secure either. Cracks appeared in its surface last fortnight as Minister for Tourism and Environment Pravinsinhji Jadeja quit the state Cabinet in an angry mood.

Jadeja's resignation came immediately after Chief Minister Chimanbhai Patel chose to divest him of his environment portfolio. The stage is now set for the pro-Mandal lobby in the

The Times of India



Jadeja: up in arms

state Janata Dal—strongly backed by a militant Jadeja—to adopt a far more strident stand in their opposition of the chief minister's uncompromising stance against the Mandal report recommendations.

At a recent convention of pro-Mandal Janata Dal leaders, Jadeja dramatically accused the Chimanbhai Government of "stabbing the people in the back" by refusing to implement the Mandal Commission recommendations in the state. Furthermore, he is planning to convene a massive pro-Mandal rally—backed by over 30 of the 70 party MLAs—in Ahmedabad very soon. But with Chimanbhai's near complete sway over the party the going will certainly not be easy for an extremely embittered Jadeja.

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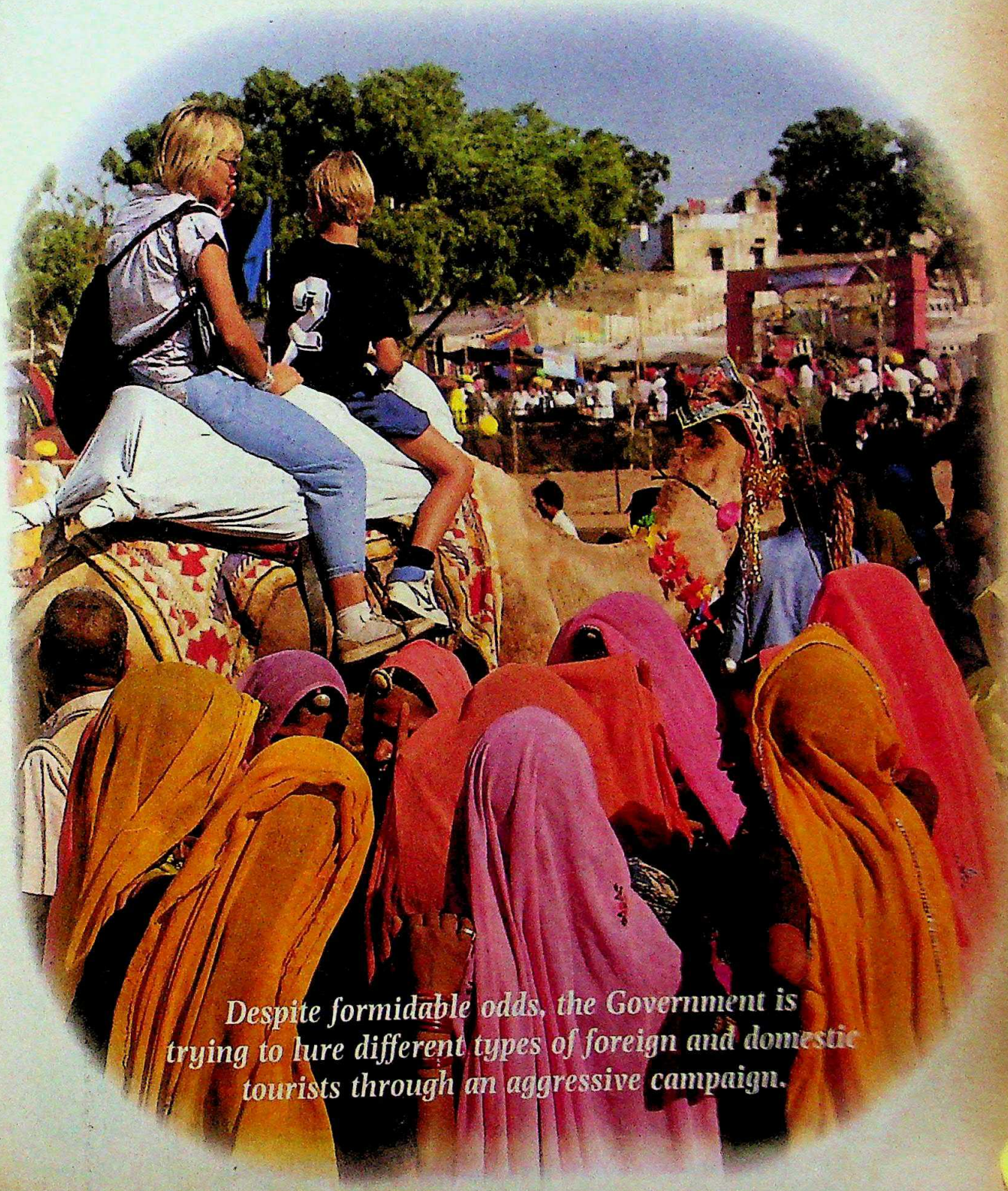
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TOURISM

A HARD SELL



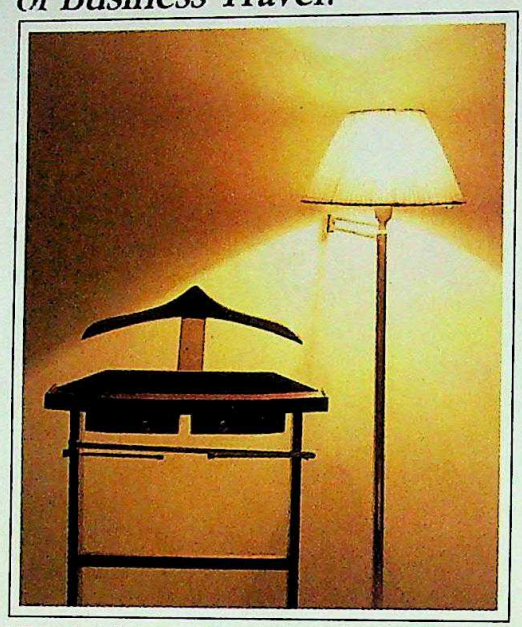
Despite formidable odds, the Government is trying to lure different types of foreign and domestic tourists through an aggressive campaign.

ASHIM GHOSH/FOTOMEDIA

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There is more to it than meets the eye



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TORY AND THE MYSTERY BEHIND EACH ANCIENT TEMPLE,

CATELY CARVED MONUMENT, SNOW-CAPPED MOUNTAIN

PEAK, MAMMOTH GLACIER, RUSHING RIVER, GU

WATERFALL, EXCITING WILDLIFE AND EVEN THE TA

THERE'S A LOT MORE TO UTTAR PRADESH THA

OTHER LANDS. A LOT MORE TO IT THAN MEETS TH

T T A R P R A D E S

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U P TOURISM 3 NAWAL KISHORE ROAD LUCKNOW

THE PSYCHO-ANALYSIS C

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you hate being made to wait.
Most of all for
your own luggage.
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best – no matter where in the
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yet lasting bonds.
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that stand up
beautifully to the tests
of time. You secretly
admire the unyielding
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being developed, and as many as 18 new hotels are slated to come up. The Government is drawing villagers into its plans, by providing loans to set up restaurants, campsites and boating facilities.

Orissa too is attempting to develop its 482-km coastline and drawing up a blueprint to promote its Buddhist historical sites. Kerala is wooing tourists to its famous backwaters. The Government is tying up with the Taj group which plans to invest Rs 100 crore in setting up a series of resorts and hotels in the state. Karnataka is marketing its famous festivals in Mysore and Hampi and luring chartered flights to Bangalore and Mangalore.

ASHIM GHOSH/PHOTO MEDIA



Sanchi stupa: wooing Buddhists.

THERE is an effort to attract a different type of tourist. Says J. Sanyal, additional director-general of tourism: "We are selling India as a shopping paradise, an ideal place for adventure tourists, and a location for conventions. Tourists in these categories spend more money than the package tour traveller."

So, special attention is being paid to Japanese tourists—far bigger spenders than Europeans. Last year, 10 million Japanese travelled abroad; India drew only 50,000 of them. Now plans are being laid to change that proportion. Says S.R. Gupte, officiating chairman and managing director of Air India: "The Japanese have taken the entire South-East Asian market by storm. We cannot miss the bus any longer." Air India will introduce two additional flights to Japan; it expects passenger traffic on that route to grow by 20 per cent, compared with 5 per cent last year. The airline is also sending a team to tell the golf-loving Japanese about the wide range of golf-courses in India. Also, Buddhist sites are being developed as tourist spots. In Sanchi and Sarnath a Rs 100-crore Japanese loan is being used to set up hotels.

Though the efforts of the tourism departments seem frenzied, with Kashmir off the tourist map, they will barely help the country maintain its share of the world tourist market. About one lakh tourists used to visit Kashmir every year. This year, that figure will fall drastically. Says Swadesh Kumar, managing director of Shikhar Travels, a leading tour operator for adventure tourism: "Our cancellations were as high as 80 per cent as adventure tourism is mostly restricted to Kashmir."

The drop in Kashmir tourists may also have an adverse effect elsewhere. The Welcomgroup chain saw its room occupancy in Agra drop by 15 per cent this summer. And the hotel industry as a whole suffered a 20-per cent drop in sales compared with the previous summer.

The attempt to provide adventure alternatives to Kashmir hasn't been very successful. The effort to open up Leh may come a cropper because of communal strife there. And even today, the major trekking routes in Sikkim are not open to tourists. Himachal Pradesh could have been an alternative, however the infrastructure is not adequate.

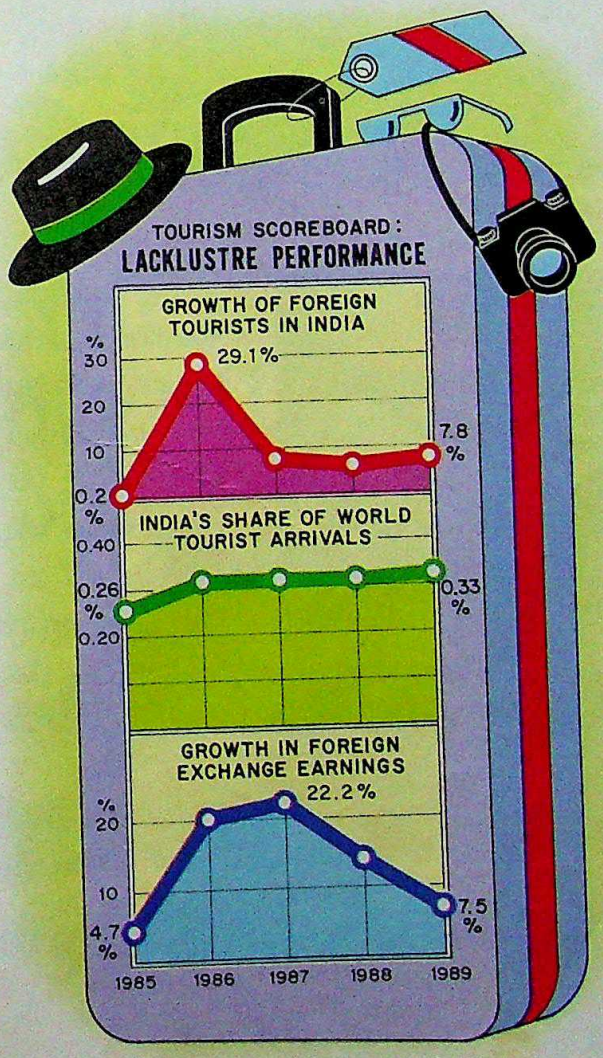


Chart by B.K. SHARMA

Convention tourism is another victim of the turmoil in Kashmir. Sher-i-Kashmir, the country's most important convention centre, located in Srinagar, has downed its shutters. So, the number of international conferences has plummeted from a peak of 482 in 1988 to 396 last year, a worrisome trend as convention tourists spend, on an average, five times more than the ordinary tourist.

One reason for the slump is the lack of infrastructure facilities. "Other countries marketed themselves abroad only when the infrastructure was ready. We don't even have the rooms," says L.P. Gupta, chairman of U.P. Hotels Ltd, which owns the Clark chain of hotels. The country will need one lakh rooms by the end of the century. Moving towards that goal will require an investment of Rs 6,000 crore in the eighth plan itself.

That sort of money simply isn't available. R. Subramanian, managing director of the Tourism Finance Corporation of

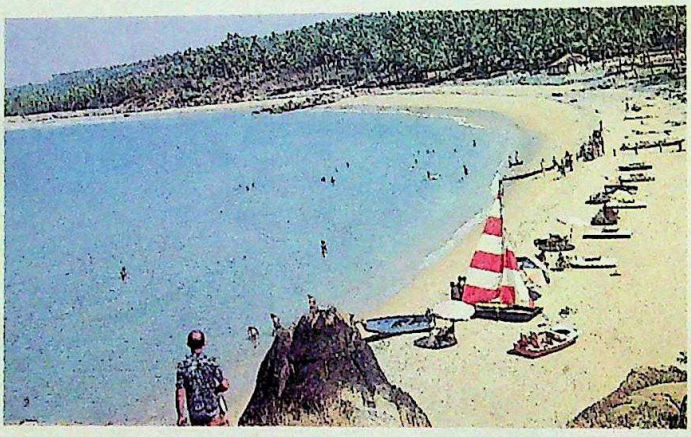
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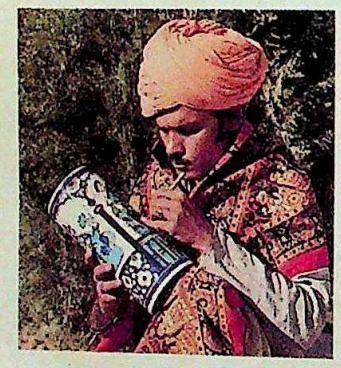
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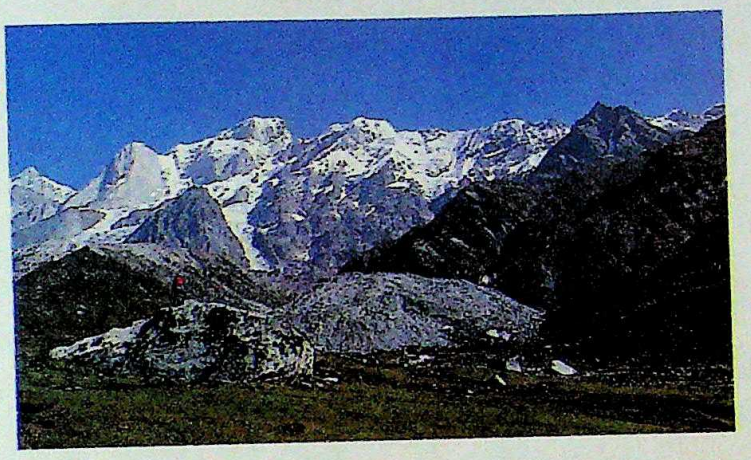


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Ind a on the occasion
191, solemnly resolve to.....

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beches, its
enures, its wild life, its
heritage,

its culture and
above all its
people."





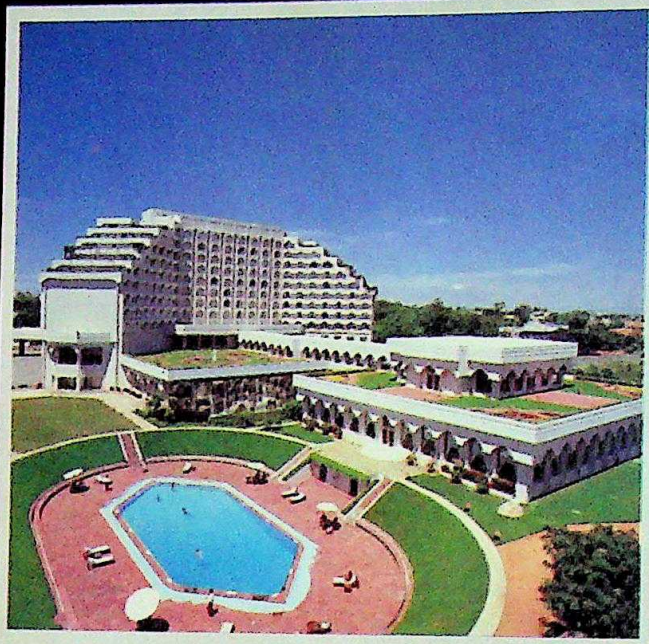
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India Ltd (TFCI), points out that financial institutions have to fork out at least 75 per cent of the investment required if any headway is to be made. Yet the tourism industry has received less than 1 per cent of the total loans disbursed by the financial institutions so far. The TFCI itself was set up to provide loans exclusively to the tourism industry but its authorised share capital is just Rs 100 crore, little more than a drop compared to requirements. The alternative is foreign investment, and the liberalisation of rules for entry into the hotel industry is an effort by the Government to bridge the funds shortfall.



"The thrust will falter, for tourism is still deemed elitist and given a low priority."

INDER SHARMA
Chairman, Sita World Travels

THE shortage of land too has hamstrung the building of new hotels. Hoteliers complain that neither the Central nor the state governments are willing to part with any land. Poor transport is yet another serious obstacle. Airports are stretched beyond limit. And there has hardly been any effort to expand the capacity of domestic air carriers. K. Lal, director (commercial) of Indian Airlines, says that the carrier's capacity has fallen by 28 per cent after the grounding of the A 320s. Next year, the airline has projected a 15-per cent drop in carrying capacity compared to this year. The consequences can be already foreseen: cancellations, delays and constant uncertainties.

On the international front, the Government is unwilling to allow foreign airlines to operate more flights to India unless other countries grant Air India reciprocal rights. In other areas, practice differs vastly from precept. For instance, foreign airlines point out that the Civil Aviation Ministry had announced they'd be permitted to increase the number of flights if they operated to Calcutta and Madras. Alan Burnett, British Airways' manager India, Nepal and Sri Lanka reports an unhappy experience: "We sent a proposal for flying to Calcutta. But the Government had put in conditionalities on our flying which weren't in the spirit of their public pronouncements. The window of opportunity was closed on our face."

Worse, India missed an opportunity to develop as the hub for foreign airlines in Asia. The reason: fuel prices here are about 50 per cent higher than in any other South-East Asian country and landing charges are also one of the highest in Asia.

Hoteliers and tourist agencies also say that instead of trying to develop new destinations which might take years to become popular, the Government should pep up infrastructure facilities in existing tourist spots. For instance, the effort now being spent on developing new sea beaches in Maharashtra might have been better spent on developing infrastructure around the tourist sites of Ajanta and Ellora.

Others complain that what the authorities give with one hand they take away with the other. For instance, the Central Government allowed Indian tour operators to

HASHIM TYABJI/FOTOMEDIA



India's many wildlife sanctuaries are now being promoted as a must on tourist itineraries.

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import air-conditioned equipment for coaches at concessional duty. But soon after, state governments hiked road taxes without assigning any reason whatsoever. For example, in Rajasthan the road tax on tourist vehicles was hiked from Rs 14,000 a year to Rs 1.20 lakh.

TAXES on hotels are another cause for griping. Gujarat has hiked luxury taxes to 30 per cent. And Rajasthan has increased the levy on foreign liquor from 12 per cent to 40 per cent. Says Ram Pershad, president, Federation of Hotel and Restaurant Associations of India: "The taxes will hardly encourage the building of more hotels. It is due to the Government's wrong policies that the rate of gowth of tourism has been falling."

And indeed, the Government seems to be astonishingly shortsighted in its tourist policy. One example: even as it launches promotion campaigns for the coming "Visit India Year" it has decided to close all tourist offices abroad in the name of economy. Such actions may save a few pence, and high taxes on the tourist industry may earn a few more paise in revenue. But they will cost the country a lot of pounds, dollars and yen by stifling the foreign exchange earning capacity of the tourism industry.

Last year, tourism overtook exports in gems and jewellery to become the country's largest net foreign exchange earner. While gem and jewellery exports earned the country net foreign exchange of Rs 1,728 crore, tourism fetched Rs 2,208 crore. Moreover, the tourism industry has the potential to generate three lakh additional jobs every year. Says P.R.S. Oberoi, vice-chairman of Oberoi Hotels: "Neither the Centre nor the state governments understand that hotels give employment. They still see it as a revenue earner."



"Hotel sites need to be urgently ear-marked to meet next year's demand."

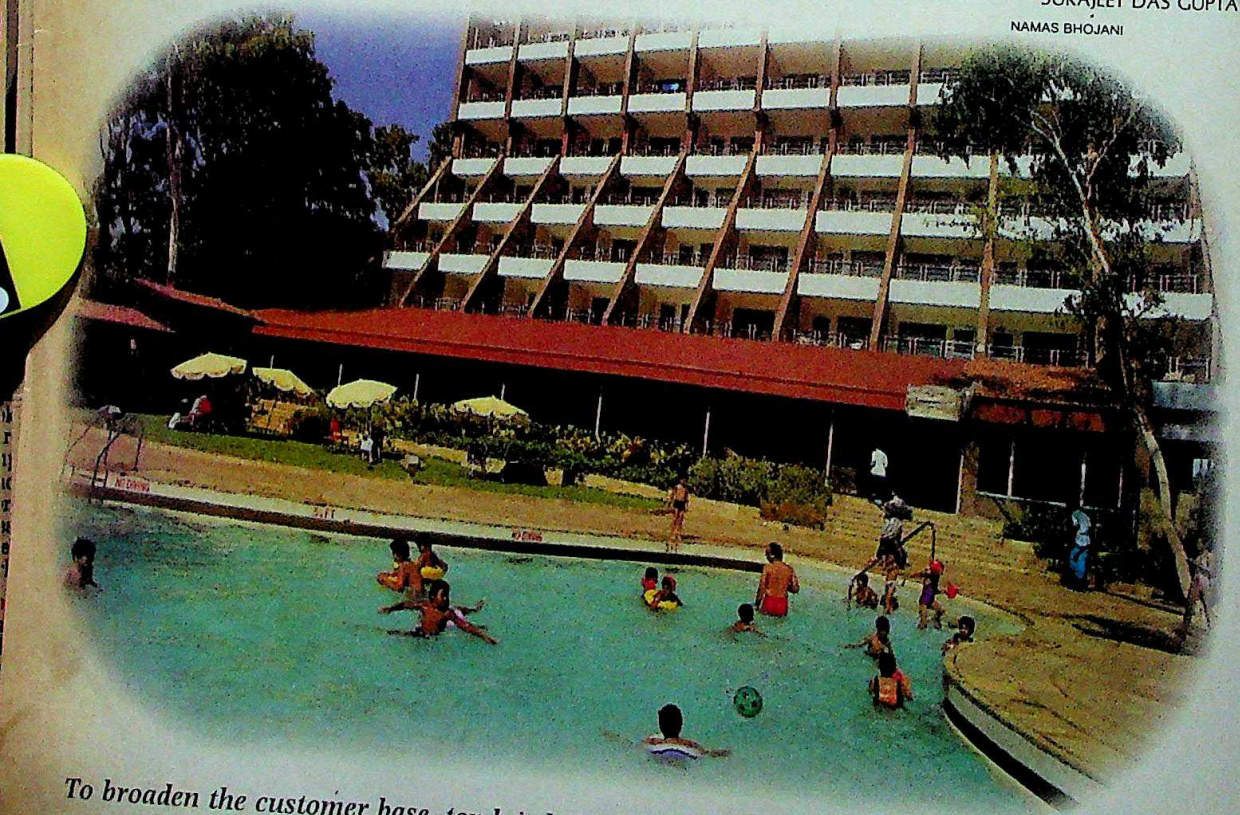
RAM PERSHAD
President, Federation of Hotels and Restaurants Association of India

Amid the gloom, there is one cause for joy: the surge in domestic tourism seems unstoppable. Last year, 50 million Indians got away from their homes on holiday. Lines of cars jam the entry to Mussourie during the summer season. In Ooty rooms have to be booked months in advance. Goa remains a top draw. And people are again pouring into Darjeeling.

For the tourism industry, the growing domestic market—many times the size of the foreign one—offers a way to fill in the annual troughs of the tourist trade and improve profitability. So even the large hotel chains have moved into budget hotels. But the industry could do with a little more help from the Government. So far, very little has been forthcoming. Inder Sharma, chairman of Sita World Travels, speaks for the entire industry when he says: "As long as tourism is associated with elitism and not seen as a foreign exchange earner, it will not be given priority." Indeed, the high taxes on tourism seem calculated to slaughter the golden goose that the industry has the potential to be.

—SURAJEET DAS GUPTA

NAMAS BHOJANI



To broaden the customer base, top hotel chains are setting up three and four-star hotels.

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"The secret of a good relationship?
Only one person gets to throw tantrums at a time."

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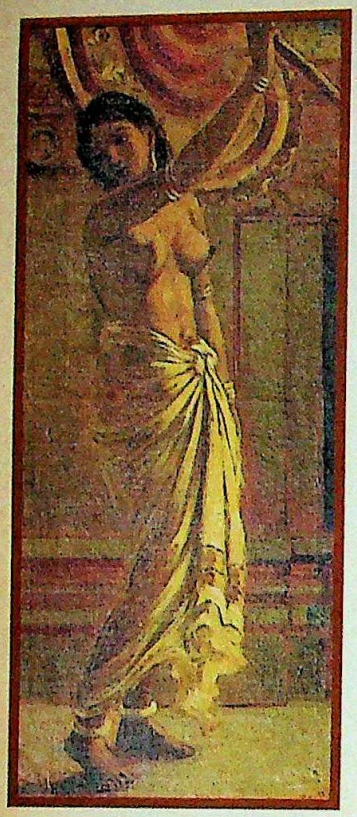
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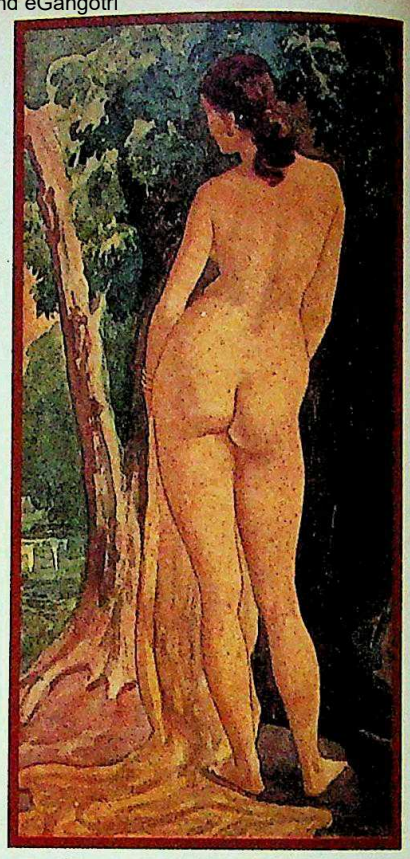


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DAMERALA RAMA RAO

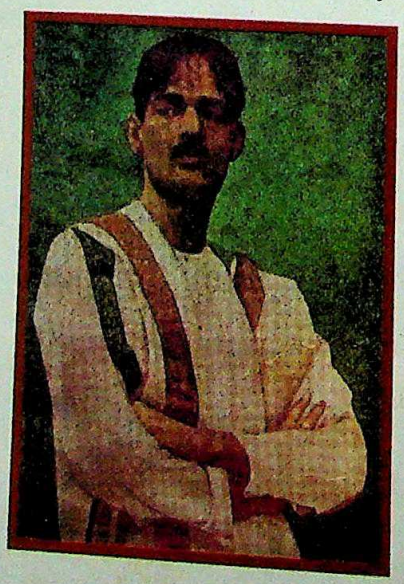
A Forgotten Treasure

The works of a master await attention and rediscovery

A dusty lane leads to the building hidden behind trees. Walls the colour of old egg yolk are in an advanced stage of peeling. A stray dog stands vigil at the gates to the Damerala Rama Rao Memorial Art Gallery in Rajamundhry. What was to have been a temple to art has now become art's indecent graveyard.

Inside the neon-lit, cavern-like room decay the masterly works of D. Rama Rao—one of the pioneers of modern Indian art—who died in 1925 of small pox when he was just 28. Nobody stops here anymore: it has become a ghost gallery. The artist responsible for the renaissance of Andhra art has been all but erased from public memory. While his near-contemporaries like Raja Ravi Varma and Amrita Sher-Gill continue to enjoy both social and commercial currency—even internationally—this brilliant painter from the banks of the Godavari, has been reduced to a footnote of art history, even in India.

Today Rama Rao is virtually unknown; even in Andhra Pradesh he is just a vague memory: somewhere in the pantheon of Andhra Desa heros. Says



A.S. Raman, noted art writer: "Rama Rao's work is a part of our national heritage and it ought to be treasured accordingly." At the moment unfortunately, this is far from the case. For instance, amazingly, the National Gallery of Modern Art has never displayed a single canvas of this master.

Neglected and forgotten, Rama Rao's works are in a sorry shape. His oeuvre of 34 finished oil paintings, 129 water colours and 26 sketch books, in addition to the loose sheets, has suffered the ravages of time. Not all of it has survived. And those which have are in a sorry state—and deteriorating fast. Many of the oils are encrusted with the dust of years. The paint is coming off, the paper coming apart. There are water stains on a large number of the sketches and the water colours. A portrait of a contemporary artist has a gash through it.

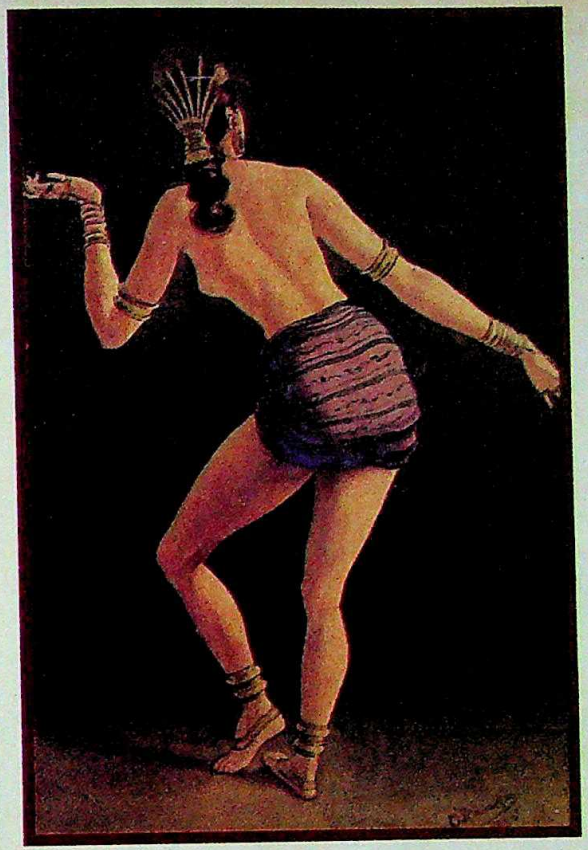
Clearly, Rama Rao's legacy is in a

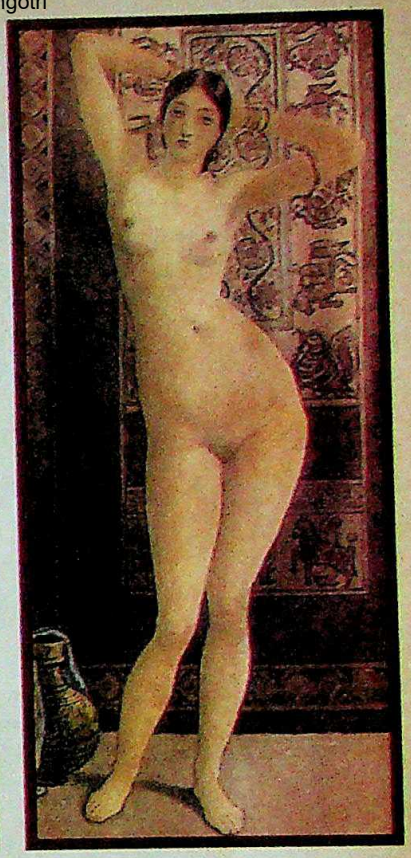
Portrait of Rama Rao by S. Prabhakaram

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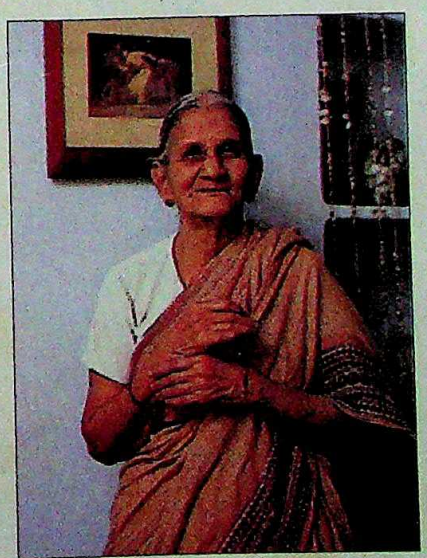


Rama Rao's women: sublime sensuality

shambles. The art school set up in his memory doesn't have a single student: the palettes were put away eight years ago, the rare books on art have become fodder for white ants. And the foundation stone for a school building gathers cracks and grime—a cruel mockery of past dreams of a mini-Shantiniketan.

BUT though the picture is bleak, there are signs that a rediscovery of Rama Rao may yet be on the cards, and some of his masterpieces may still be salvaged. Sukanto Basu, former chief restorer of the National Museum, who recently visited Rajamundhry to evaluate the extent of the damage for the Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage, says the work requires urgent treatment. Says he: "It would be a pity if the works of a master who is the combination of Nandalal Bose and Sher-Gill were destroyed through neglect."

As for the painter himself? Though he died young he had his brief moments of glory: the coveted Mayo Prize at the J.J. School of Arts in Bombay, the Viceroy's prize (Lord Reading bought his landscape, The Godavari in the Eastern Ghats) at the Calcutta Art Society's exhibition. The accolades came from abroad too. His canvasses were appreciated at the Empire Exhibition in Wembley in the early '20s. His brother, Prabodh Chand Rao, 82, recalls that three of his canvasses and only one from Shantiniketan were chosen for Wembley. "They did not want to return the paintings," he says. O.J. Couldtray, the former principal of the Government College of Arts in Rajamundhry, considered Rama Rao, his protege, a genius. On his return to England, he wrote:



Wife Satyavani: major inspiration

"Never as far as we know since Ajanta had so much of the visible aspect of Hindu social life been used pictorially with such mastery."

Why then has Rama Rao suffered near total obscurity? One reason could be the fact that he was an unabashed romanticist. His idyllic court scenes, the ethereal-looking women at the well and his elegantly sensual goddesses may appear biscuit-tinnish—grounded Apsaras with the Ajanta eyebrows and svelte, swaying S-curve bodies.

Or it could be that his oeuvre was seen to be part of the same movement as the Bengal revivalist school which for many years was considered wishy-washy by Indian art historians. Moreover, Rama Rao's work does not reflect any of the turbulence of the modern art movement in Paris. One reason why Rama Rao's contributions are relatively unsung could be the limitations he set to his painterly world. Explains veteran painter Raidappa Naidu: "He confined himself to villages and towns in Rajamundhry." Yet what distinguished Rama Rao from other painters of his time is his use of western techniques to portray Indian subjects.

Yet he retained the bohemian spirit of the artist. His all-consuming passion for art led him to break many of society's taboos: he was the first among the

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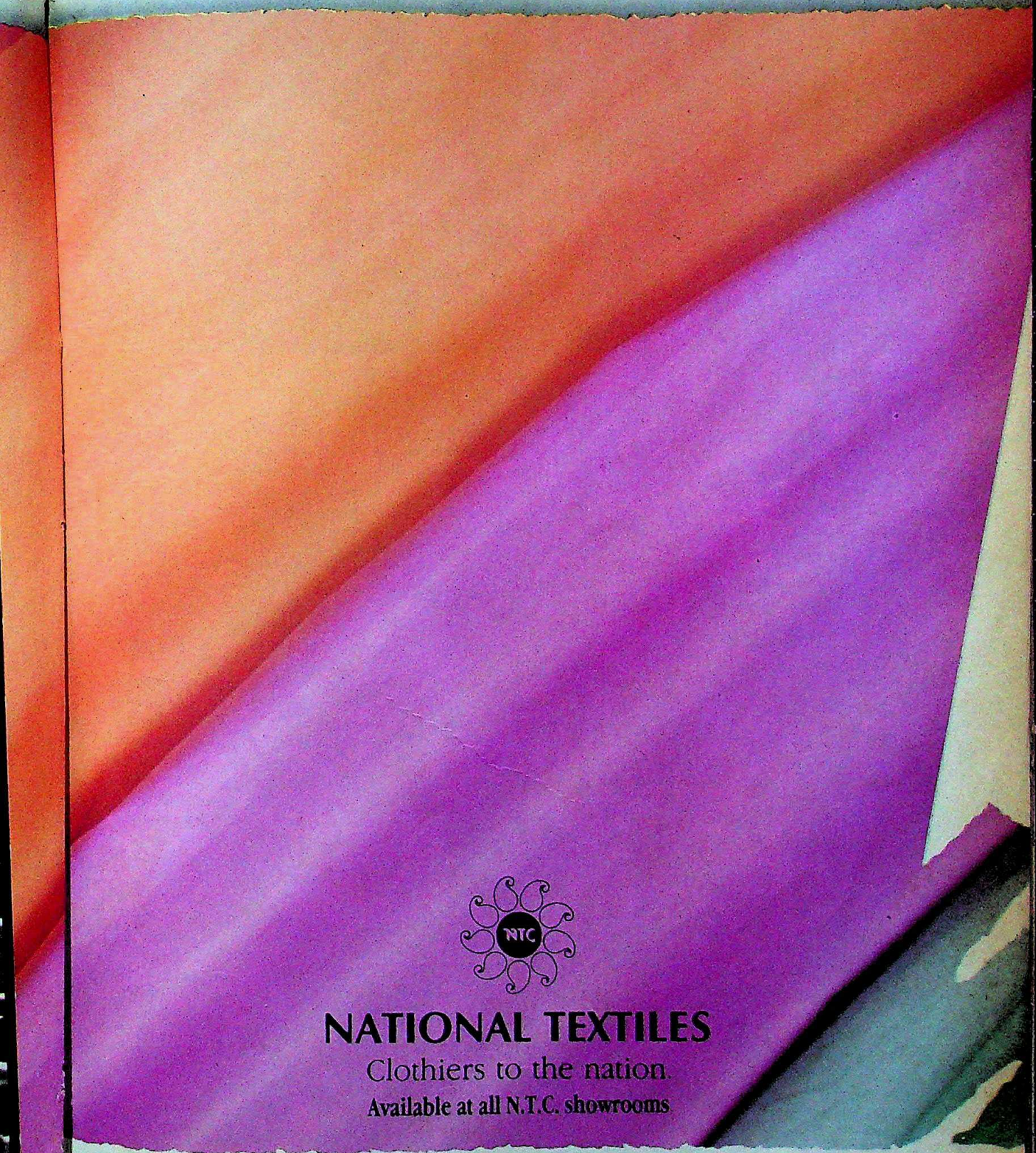
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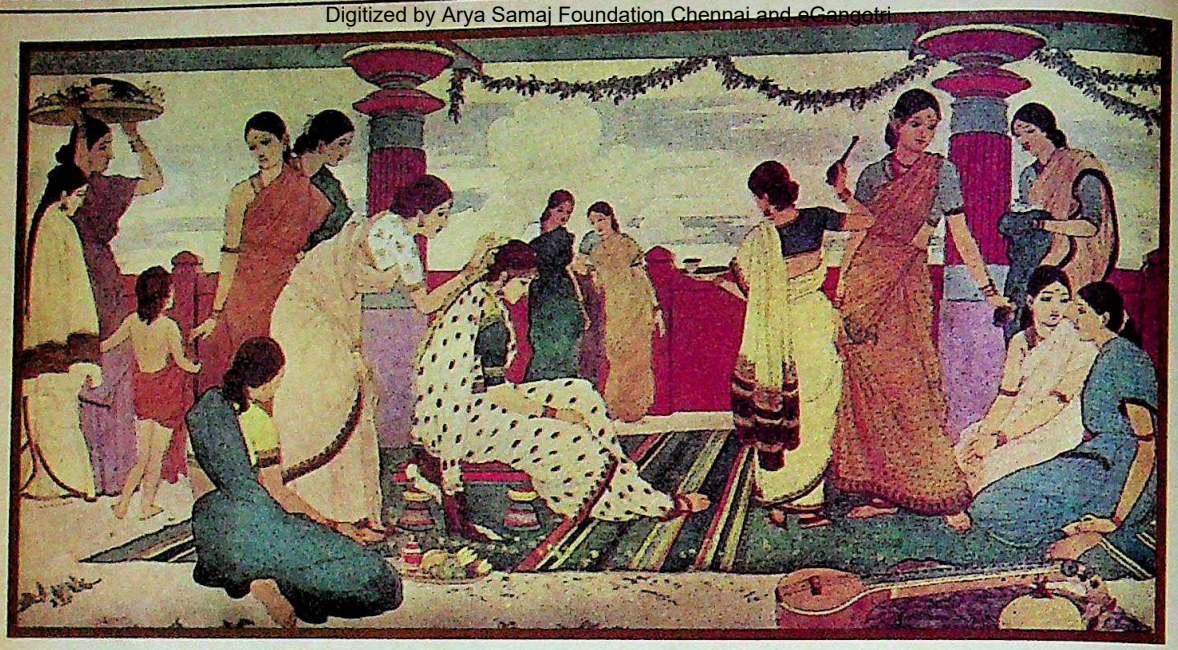
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modern Indian painters to paint frontal nudes. And to get the anatomy right he hired a local girl, Nakula, to pose in the nude for him. In a conservative town like Rajamundhry during the first quarter of the century, this was nothing less than revolutionary. His brother, Prabodh Rao, explains that Nakula was the mistress of a man who sold soda water bottles. "She was a hefty woman. Even my sister used to sit with my brother and paint her."

Rama Rao's wife, Satyavani, was obviously the inspiration for many of his other paintings: it was her face that he put on every woman he painted, mythological or real. Says the octogenarian Satyavani: "He used to tell me that he could not pick up a brush if I were not there."

Interestingly, Rama Rao was not a solitary painter. He drew friends and family into his entrancing web of colours and light and shade. The Damerala house in Rajamundhry became a school of art with disciples like his friends Varada Venakata Ratnam—who eventually was to carry on his mission after his death—and Chamkur Satyanarayna. And more interestingly even his younger sister Butchi Krishnamma, now 92, was drawn into the fold and would use his brushes and his left-over paints. Rama Rao's wife, Satyavani who was only 16 when he died, also took up the brush.

Pushpalankara (1923), a major work: unabashed romanticist

Rama Rao's obsession for art seems to have started early. "He was always sketching as a child," says his brother. "He did badly in school, especially after the eigth." Luckily his elder brother, D. Venkat Rao, a college lecturer introduced him to Couldtray, then principal of Rajamundhry college of arts who became his mentor. He took him to Ajanta and Ellora and persuaded his father, an ayurvedic doctor, to send Rama Rao to the J.J. School of Arts. Travels through India followed: his sketches are pictorial diaries.

THE disciples formed an association and took over Rama Rao's legacy after his death. And they continued the art school with a similar zeal. But in 1970 they donated the painter's works to the state Government. And, gradually, the gallery lost its purpose. Today, the state allocates only Rs 3,000 a year for maintenance. Its administrative head is the principal of the nearby polytechnic and he has no training in art. The family is quite indifferent. His brother Prabodh did flirt with painting briefly. "But, I had to be practical." He is in the sanitary ware business now. The painter's nephew, who bears the same name as his uncle, continues to needle the Government. "I suppose it is because I have the same name, I feel for the work. The others don't," he says.

The gallery named after him



Meanwhile, the gallery continues to live in obscurity. The burden of all the maintenance falls on Veerbhadra, the caretaker, who guards the works of the master as if they were his life. For the sake of art. And even more so for a pledge given to Rama Rao's brother, D. Raja Rao, on his death bed. Says he: "He told me to look after the paintings because nobody else in the family would."

The paintings, Basu says, would have been in a far worse condition had it not been for Veerbhadra. But that is poor consolation for the irresponsible destruction of a national treasure. Clearly, it's time that the Government agencies stepped in and restored to their rightful place the works of this forgotten master.

—MADHU JAIN in Rajamundhry

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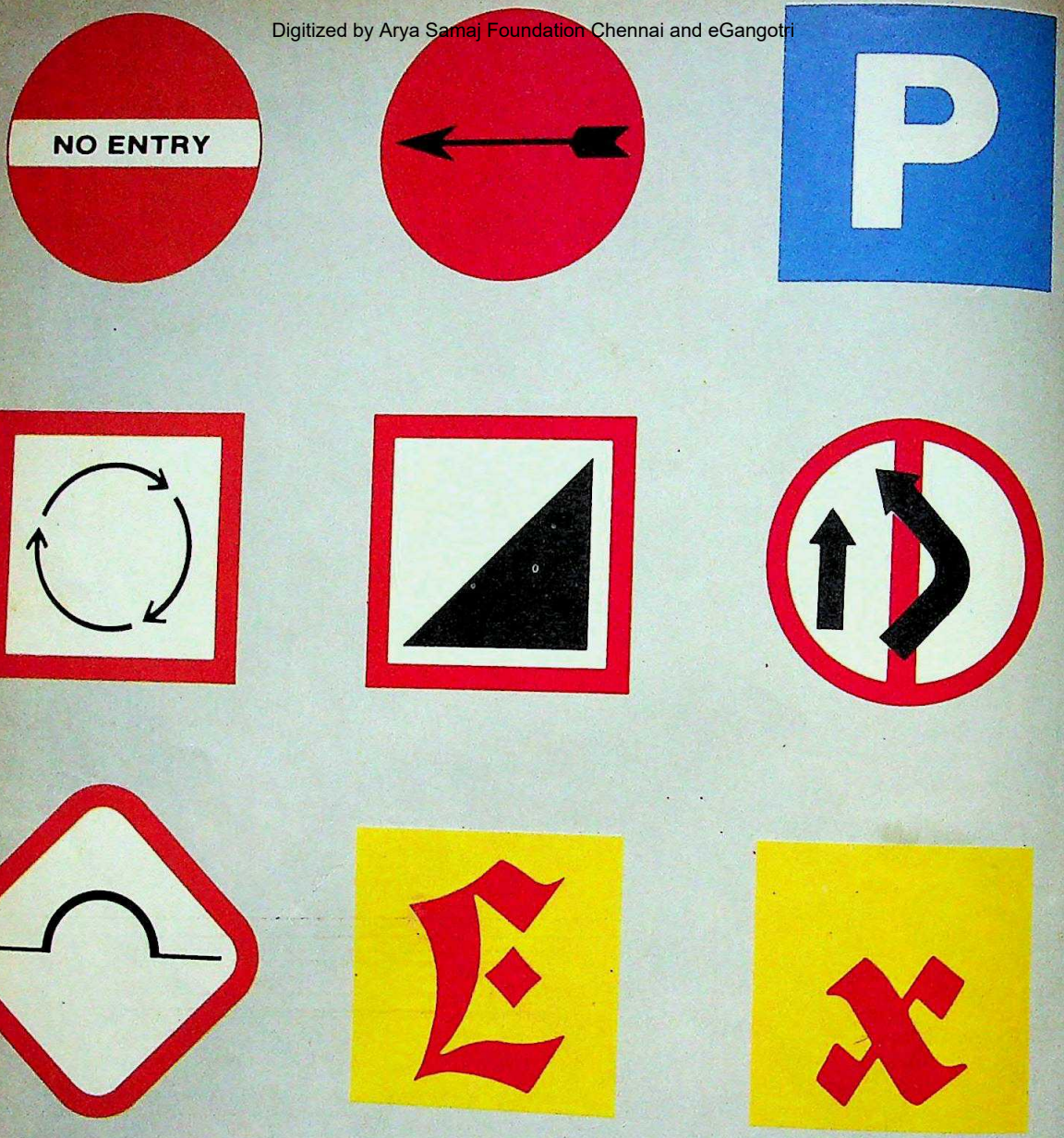
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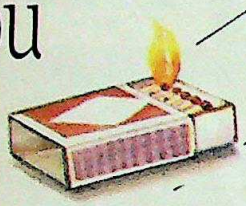
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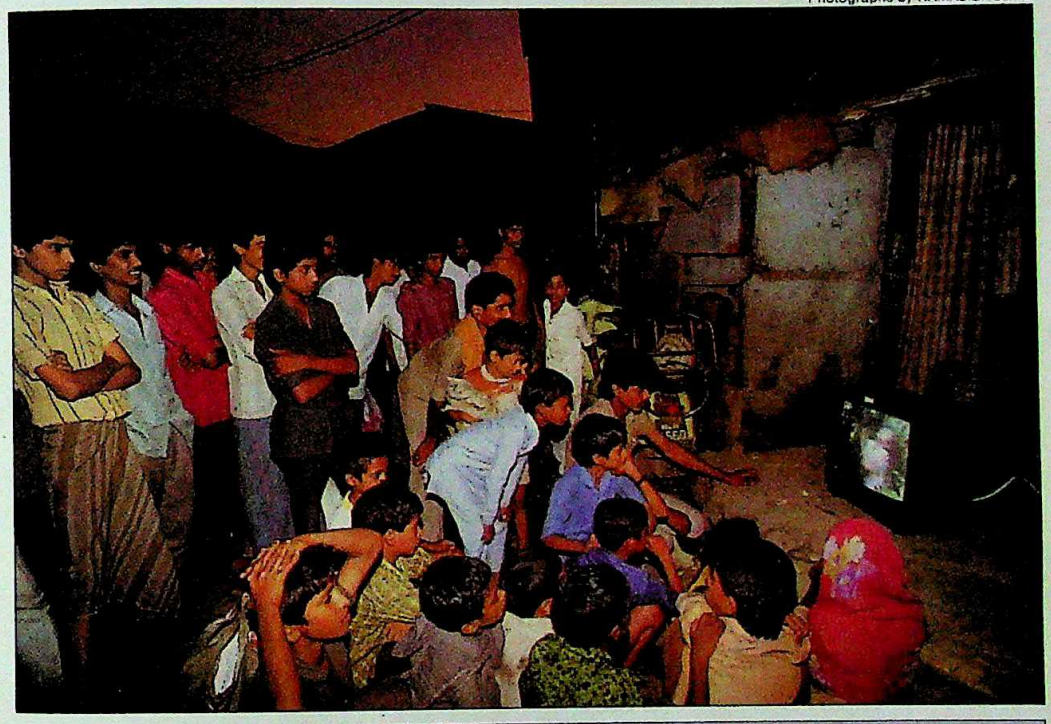
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CABLE TELEVISION

Vying for the Viewers

Cable TV and the use of dish antennae are alternatives to Doordarshan's dreary fare, that are catching on fast in the country's cities and villages.

Photographs by NAMAS BHOJANI



Cable TV transmission in a Bombay slum: a class-to-mass phenomenon

By PARANJOY GUHA THAKURTA

► *Siddhartha Srivastava, a cable television operator in Bombay, knew about Iraq's invasion of Kuwait within hours of Saddam Hussein's tanks rolling in—long before the rest of the country did. Reason: his TV set is hooked to a dish antenna which can receive programmes relayed round the clock by the American Cable News Network (CNN) through a Soviet satellite, Stationar.*

► *Sirajuddin Ismail Sheikh, who lives in a hutment in Dharavi, Bombay, lost his right arm in an industrial accident and received Rs 36,000 as compensation. Most of the money was invested this September on a video cassette recorder, a colour TV, an amplifier with a modulator and coils of co-axial cables. Through this system, two Hindi films are shown every day on over 50 TV sets belonging to families of petty traders, dealers in metal scrap and factory workers. Each subscriber pays Rs 200 as an initial deposit and thereafter Rs 60 a month. Sheikh should recover his investment in six months.*

► *Pravesh Sethi runs a store selling garments at Kamala Nagar in north Delhi. He also operates a cable TV network which, besides showing the usual films, relays religious programmes on alternate mornings—bhajans, gurubani and so on. What has surprised Sethi is the flood of enquiries from a neighbourhood slum, Chandrawal.*

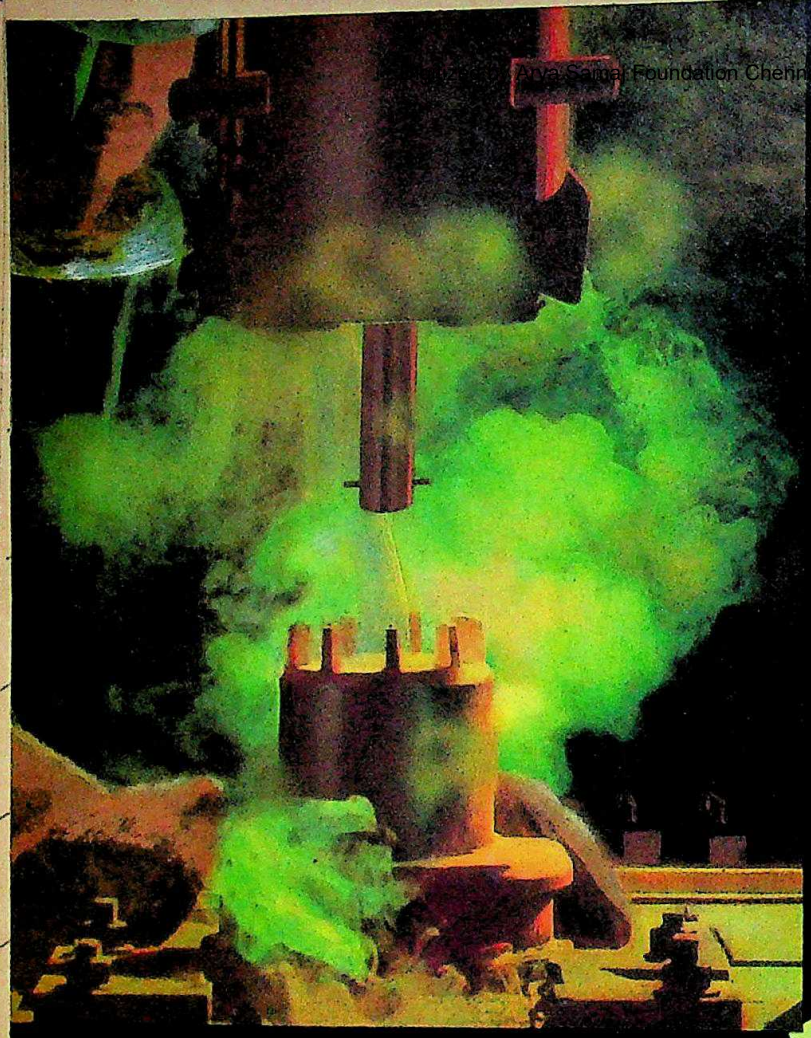
► *Lakadia is a small nondescript village in Gujarat's Kachch district. Over the last four years, almost all its residents who own TV sets have been viewing the latest Bombay films over and above the regular Doordarshan fare. Reason: the village has a dish antenna with a cable network attached to it which was installed for less than Rs 50,000.*

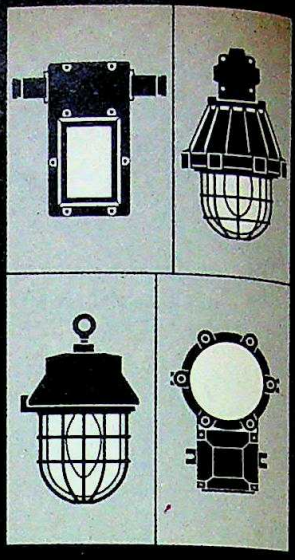
SETHI, Sheikh, Srivastava and the inhabitants of Lakadia represent a new breed of Indians who have an alternative to the dreary fare dished out by Doordarshan. It's a tribe which is growing at an incredibly fast pace. Five years ago there were barely 150 cable TV operators in the country, almost all of them in Bombay. Today the number has crossed 4,000. And though three-fourths of them are still in western India, they are quickly expanding their operations to other parts of the country. The story is much the same in dish antennae. In 1985, there were less than 5,000 of them in India. Today, the figure is at least five times higher and growing by 100 every month. The spread is particularly fast in smaller towns in the west and the north.

What makes that rapid-fire growth even more surprising is that according to the letter of the law it is illegal to watch foreign telecasts, whether it be CNN, Visnews, AsiaSat or a host of Russian and Chinese programmes. At the same time, it is perfectly legal to manufacture and sell antennae

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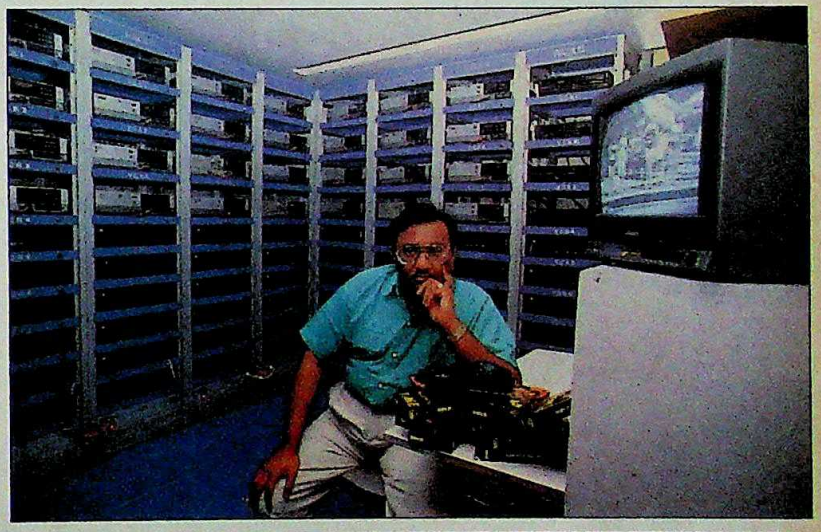
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which can catch these telecasts. The law is full of loopholes like that. "We are trying to tackle a 21st century technology with a legal framework—the Indian Telegraph Act—which came into being way back in 1885," admits a senior official in the Ministry of Communications.

Equally important, with technology changing by the day, it's virtually impossible to enforce rules. More and more communications satellites are being used for direct broadcasting of programmes to be picked up by countless dish antennae. Next year, AsiaSat—the world's first satellite TV system designed to be supranational—will be beaming a number of entertainment programmes to this part of the world. Its reach will stretch from Istanbul in the west to Tokyo in the north and Singapore in the south. And to make it even more maddening for law-enforcing agencies, the size of powerful antennae is shrinking by the year.

So, the Indian Government can do little but turn a blind eye to the proliferation of cable TV networks and the growing use of dish antennae. For instance, the law says that only Doordarshan programmes can be received by dish antennae. But of the 25,000 dish antennae in existence, about 1,000 are C-band antennae which means they can receive foreign telecasts. (A number of hotels are already showing CNN programmes.)

Similarly, the cables of a cable TV network are not meant to cross a public road unless specific licences have been obtained from the Union Ministry of Communications as well as local municipal authorities. But this rule is hardly enforced. Take Bombay's Grant Road and Lamington Road, for instance. Above rows of cloth shops and 'cages' housing prostitutes, white cables can be seen criss-crossing busy thoroughfares. A cable TV operator admitted that local authorities had been bribed handsomely to ensure that a cable could be laid beneath Bandra's Linking Road. This is an exception, no doubt. For cables are normally strung across roof-tops.



Shah's consortium holds cable rights for 3,000 films

When cable TV started in Bombay eight years ago, it was confined largely to posh multi-storeyed building complexes. In recent years, however, it has been spreading horizontally. At the same time, it has changed from a 'class' phenomenon to a 'mass' one. In Dharavi alone, at least a dozen operators have come up in the last few months. Says Srinivas Naidu, one such operator: "You can have all the advantages of a VCP without owning one."

Till around March this year, the legal position of most cable TV operators was rather nebulous. Various court battles had been fought among interest groups in the video business, the film industry and local authorities. And judgements gave varying interpretations to the laws. The Bombay High Court then ruled that cable operators could not broadcast feature films without first obtaining permission from the copyright owner. Soon thereafter, Dhiraj ('Dhirubhai') Shah—who rose from selling electronic goods in Bombay's suburbs to become a kingpin of the video business—formed a consortium for video copyright owners. The group currently owns the video and cable rights of over 3,000 Hindi feature films. "The cable TV business is spreading like wildfire. In Bombay it has more than doubled in the last two years," says Shah.

Teaming up with Shah and his consortium called Cable Video (India) Pvt Ltd is a group of four young men, Yogesh Radhakrishnan, Yogesh Shah, Ram Punjabi and Jagjit Singh Kohli, who have formed Encore Cable Associates which acts as the concessionaire for the western region licensing cable TV operators and also sells advertising space in the video films shown. And interestingly, Shah and the Encore group also spearhead the Indian Federation Against Copyright Theft (INFACT) which complains to the police against illegal operators. "In the last five months, raids have been conducted against over 100 illegal cable TV operators on our complaints," says Kohli. But he admits that the police have more pressing problems to tackle than video piracy or entertainment tax evasion.

PUNJABI claims that over 1,200 cable TV operators have registered themselves with Encore and that on an average each operator has 100 subscribers. Punjabi's own cable TV operation in the Grant Road area, an unusually large one, has close to 1,000 subscribers. If these figures are accurate, some 1.2 lakh TV sets in greater Bombay have cable attachments. In other words, if there are five viewers per TV set the total viewership is 6 lakh. Assuming conservatively that Rs 75 is paid on an average by each household for cable TV facilities, the total quantum of subscription fees in Bombay works out to over Rs 10 crore per year. The actual amount is probably higher.

Pathfinders India, the market research wing of Lintas, surveyed nearly 8,000 persons with monthly household incomes exceeding Rs 750 in 16 cities. Their research revealed that nearly 3 per cent had cable TV facilities and that 70 per cent used these facilities at least twice a week.

Other surveys have come up with equally impressive conclusions. The Operations Research Group claimed in a recent study conducted on behalf of Doordarshan in 19 cities that the number of cable networks had jumped from 100 in 1985 to 1,900 last year and then leapt to around 3,500 this year. It also found that over 2.5 lakh households have access to cable TV, 74 per cent in the west (including nearly 60 per cent in Bombay alone), 12 per cent in the north, 10 per cent in the south and 4 per cent in the east.

What started out as a Bombay phenomenon is gradually

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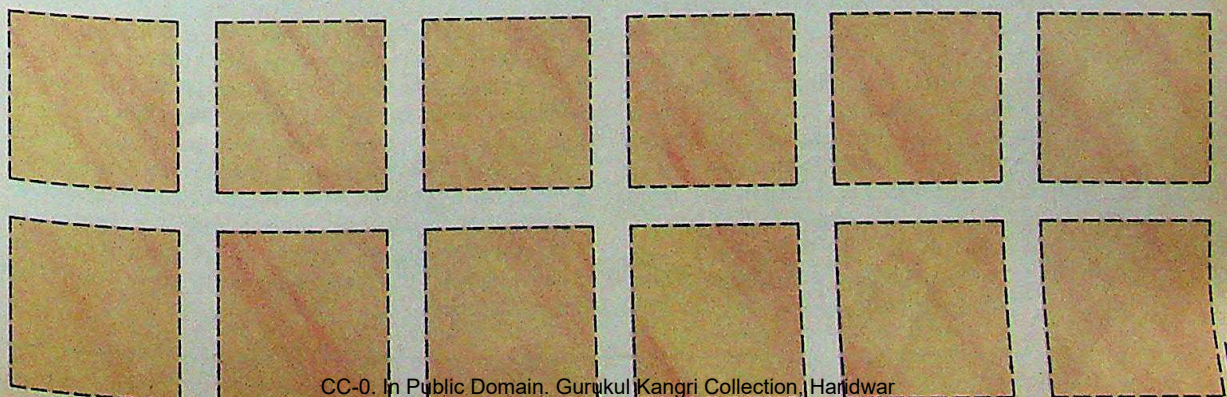
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spreading all over India. Hyderabad and Bangalore each have over 250 cable TV operators. And small towns like Nadiad, Gujarat and Kohlapur, Maharashtra, both have over 75 of them. Showtime Communications, the sole concessionaire for northern India for the copyright-owning consortium, claims it will be licensing 500 cable TV operators in the Delhi region by the end of the year and hopes that this number will more than double by the end of 1991. "Almost all the new multi-storeyed buildings coming up in the National Capital Region have made provision for cable TV," says Showtime's director, P. Samraj. The Andhra Pradesh Government has initiated a scheme to financially assist cable TV operators.

The incredible spread of cable TV in the country has various dimensions. First, it is an extremely lucrative cottage industry. On an investment between Rs 30,000 and Rs 50,000, the returns are quick—the initial sums can be recovered in less than half a year. And running expenses are negligible, even if the operator is loosely within the ambit of law and pays the copyright owner's concessionaire Rs 10,000-20,000 a year on easy instalments to screen 30 Hindi films each month over a cable network. Certain big business houses are now reportedly planning to enter the field.

The growth of cable TV is also directly related to the inadequacies of Doordarshan programmes. Which is also the main factor behind the mushrooming of video magazines. For advertisers cable has at least one important advantage over video: the commercials can't be fast-forwarded. (The Pathfinders study says that nearly 40 per cent of viewers of video films found that advertisements had been zapped in prints, presumably because they were pirated cassettes.)

Cable TV offers segmentation of viewership which has its plus-points. "Being a closely-controlled medium, cable is useful for direct marketing since households can be virtually pinpointed," says Lynn Desouza, media director, Trikaya Grey. Thus, jewellers, saree-sellers and department stores are advertising frequently on cable. As are large companies like Hindustan Lever, Parle, Nestle's, Cease Fire, Godrej and MRF.

Future markets—that's also the main attraction India holds for international satellite services like CNN and AsiaSat. Which is why they are beaming their programmes 'free' to this country instead of scrambling them for subscribers who pay for the services.

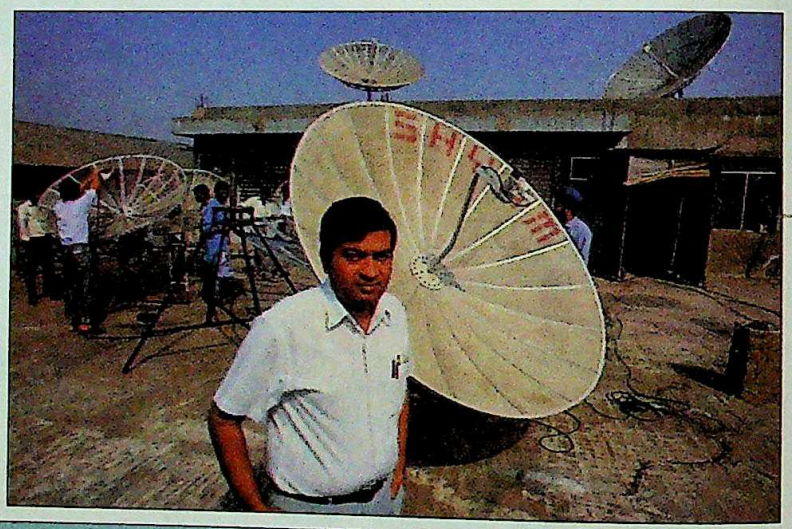
As far as manufacturing receiving equipment is concerned, the country has made quick progress. In west Delhi's Naraina, Rajiv Mehrotra, 35, a home-grown engineer oversees the Shyam group of firms which will earn some Rs 6.5 crore selling a record 9,000 dish antenna systems this year, nearly twice as much as last year. The group has wired many townships including the Hindustan Aluminium one at Renukoot, Uttar Pradesh. Though many licences have been issued for manufacture of such systems, besides Shyam there are only three other prominent firms in the fray—at Delhi, Madras and Coimbatore.

Mehrotra points out how Shyam's prices have crashed in recent times. A 6-feet diameter S-band dish antenna capable of receiving Doordarshan programmes was priced at Rs 45,000 in 1984, Rs 20,000 two years later, Rs 10,000 in 1988 and, at present, sells for around Rs 7,500. A C-band antenna which can receive foreign programmes, however, costs much more: between Rs 70,000 and Rs 1.2 lakh, but even these prices may ease in the years ahead. "It's become the new status symbol," says Mehrotra.

HOW quickly then will India become part of the global village? At least some are prepared to conjure fantastic futuristic visions. Media personality Amit Khanna dreams of the time five years from now when an integrated services digital network using fibre-optic cables will connect his home and office to the rest of the country and the rest of the world—to transmit and receive voices, data, pictures, news, views ... the complete works of Shakespeare on a small floppy disc—at the proverbial push of a few buttons. "Then Doordarshan will be marginalised," says Khanna.

Let dreamers dream, counter Doordarshan officials. Just as radio will not be rendered obsolete, so too the national TV monopoly will grow, they add. Industry observers exaggerate the impact of cable TV, the argument runs. Thus while TV manufacturers claim that there are 40 million TV sets in the country, the 'actual' number is said to be closer to 25 million. And during prime time, Doordarshan is watched by around 100 million viewers who still comprise less than one-eighth of the country's population.

So certain imbalances will remain in this country as in the rest of the world before the globe becomes a *gaon*. After all, the entire continent of Africa has fewer telephone lines than the city of Tokyo. But how will the Indian Government respond to the growth of cable TV and the use of dish antennae. Licence fees are certain to be hiked considerably. But controlling the use of antennae is tough and scrambling telecasts a rather expensive and technically difficult proposition. The ethics of viewing cigarette and liquor advertisements will be debated afresh as more foreign programmes are watched by Indians. As will the principles of censoring TV programmes considered anti-national or provocative. Thus, the Government in this country can only wait and watch helplessly the inexorable march of the communications revolution.



Antenna manufacturer Mehrotra says sales are booming

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EXPORT INITIATIVE

AN unusual meeting took place last fortnight at the headquarters of the State Trading Corporation (STC). A high-powered team from Pepsi Inc's New York office met STC representatives to exchange views on how Pepsi could assist India's export efforts. Pepsi's Indian operations are expected to generate around Rs 195 crore worth of exports in a decade, which will be half its turnover during the period. Of the export turnover, 80 per cent will be Pepsi India's own products while the balance can comprise selected items purchased from other producers provided certain value-addition norms are met.

At present, the processed foods conglomerate and its associates purchase goods—such as furniture, packaging material, glass bottles and linen—worth some $5 billion (over Rs 8,500 crore) a year from various countries but little or nothing from India. Some of these items could come from India. Perhaps STC will be able to persuade Pepsi to even purchase goods like footballs made in Punjab homes. STC and Pepsi sources are extremely tight-lipped about the "preliminary talks" because both are keen on working out the modalities to ensure that existing exports are not re-routed via Pepsi to enable it to fulfil its export obligations.

SILVER LINING

CLOSE on the heels of the Government's decision to sell gold seized from smugglers to exporters of jewellery, comes the glittering news that confiscated silver, which is cluttering customs godowns, will also be sold. This year, over 150 tonnes of silver valued at over Rs 100 crore has been seized (17 tonnes were seized in 1988, 100 tonnes in 1989). An MMTC scheme for exporting silver and silver jewellery has been approved. MMTC feels that it may be possible to enhance silver exports by around Rs 200 crore.

RESEARCH COMPETITION

THE Vadodara-based Operations Research Group (ORG), which pioneered retail audit surveys in India, is going to face competition in consumer electronics surveys from the Madras-based Hamsa Research Group. Promoted by two directors of the advertising agency headed by R.K. Swamy, Hamsa launched a survey in early October to determine the market sizes and shares of television sets, VCPs and VCRs, two-in-ones and music systems. Philips, Videocon, Onida and Nelco, have already subscribed to the results of the three-month-long pilot study which will be priced at Rs 15,000. Sales trends of these products in 400 retail outlets at the major cities will be studied. Next on the Hamsa agenda: watches and clocks.

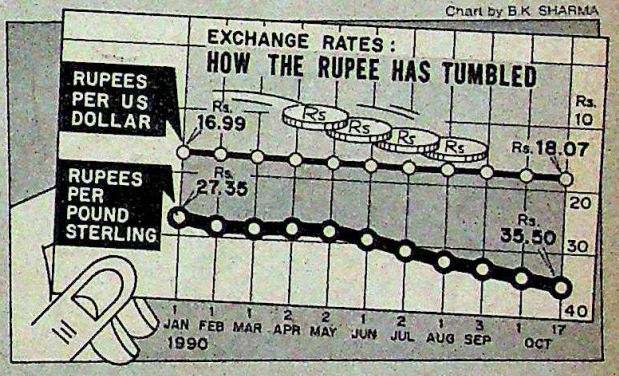
NOVEL SCHEMES

AT present, a holder of a Janaraksha policy of the Life Insurance Corporation (LIC) is allowed three lapses in payments of premia over the period of the policy contract. So what does a person whose income is irregular do? Could the premium amount be made flexible and the insurance cover made to move up or down accordingly? If some new schemes LIC is planning to introduce in the near future get government approval, this could be possible. Other schemes on the anvil: clubbing the pensions of a husband-wife team so that any one can receive a lumpsum payment in case his or her partner dies; a pension scheme for parents of handicapped children; and also combining insurance risk-cover and pension benefits by persuading the Government to amend the income tax rules.

STEADY DEPRECIATION

ONE of the standard conditions imposed by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) on countries seeking a loan from it is a sharp depreciation of the local currency. While certain financial pundits are today

Chart by B.K. SHARMA



arguing in favour of a sudden, one-time 5 to 7 per cent devaluation in the international value of the Indian rupee to boost exports, the Reserve Bank of India Governor R.N. Malhotra categorically states that such a drastic step is totally out of the question. What the country's central bank obviously prefers is creeping devaluation.

Between April 1980 and March 1989, the value of the rupee came down by 66.9 per cent against the Japanese yen, 47.6 per cent against the German mark, 44.7 per cent against the American dollar and 27.1 per cent against the British pound. Also significant is the fact that over the last five years or so, the Reserve Bank has been announcing new rates for the rupee virtually every day. This trend still continues and during the current calendar year, that is till October 17, the rupee was devalued by 6.36 per cent against the dollar while its fall vis-a-vis the pound was a steeper 29.8 per cent *(see chart)*. Some observers feel that one dollar will be worth Rs 20 by the end of the year. Hold on IMF, here we come.

CORRECTION: We have found after further investigation that the item published in these columns (October 31) stating that Binatone has lost out in India and that Weston Electroniks is negotiating for the purchase of Binatone's Indian operation is incorrect. The error and damage caused to Binatone is regretted.

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INFLATION

The Ominous Spiral

Soaring prices push the Government into a corner

IN certain markets in the capital, a curious aberration has taken place: apples cost less than potatoes or onions. In early-October, merchants paid Rs 40 to transport 100 kg of foodgrain from Hapur, Uttar Pradesh to Patna, Bihar. The rate is now Rs 73. Prices of groundnut oil in Gujarat, which normally ease around this time of the year on account of new crop arrivals, show no signs of plummeting.

The story is repeated across the length and breadth of the country. In not only food, but industrial products as well. Crucial infrastructure is also under pressure.

All this indicates that the current fiscal year is almost certainly going to witness double-digit inflation. That too by the official wholesale price index (WPI) which tends to under-state the actual extent of the rise in prices. The mid-October decision to hike prices of most petroleum products by 25 per cent will unleash across-the-board price increases which will affect all sectors of the economy.

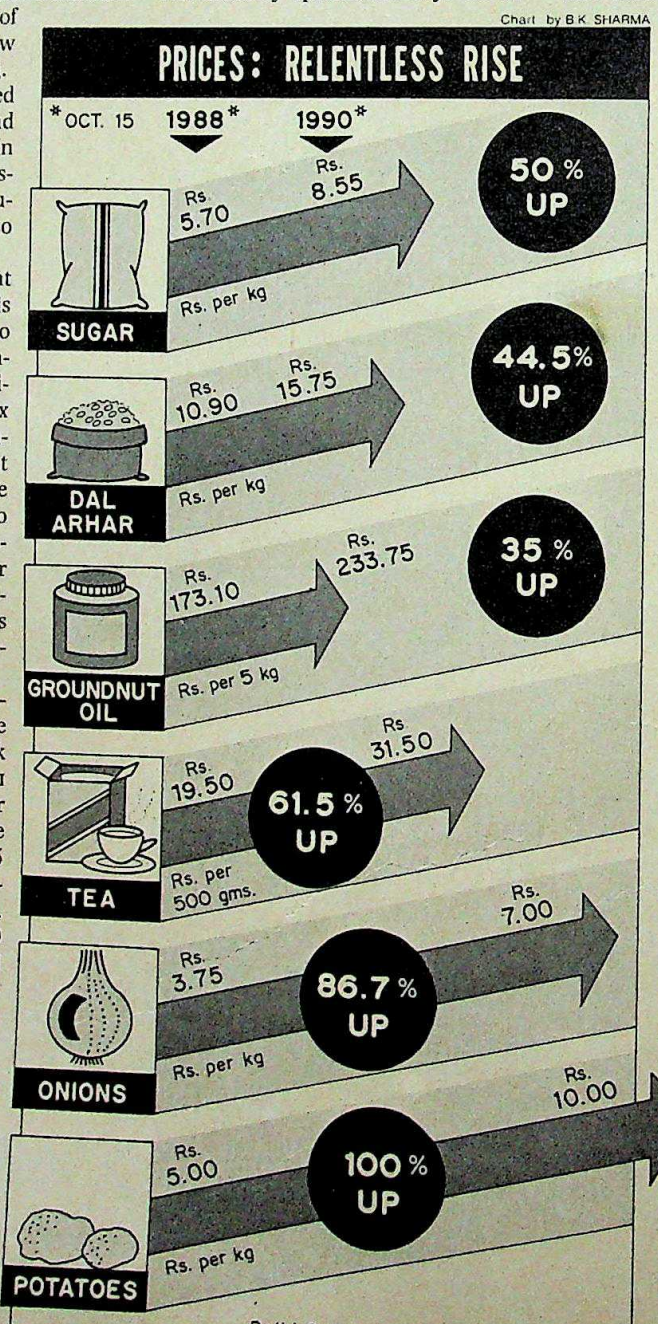
How bad is the situation really? It may not be as bad as famine-struck 1966-67 when the WPI jumped by nearly 14 per cent in one year. Or the first oil shock of 1974-75 which sent the index soaring by a record 25 per cent. Or even like 1979-80 when prices skyrocketed by 17 per cent in the aftermath of the Charan Singh government's downfall.

The Government claims the hike in the petroleum prices will increase the WPI by an additional 1.5 per cent. "We were hoping for an annual rate of inflation of around 7 per cent before Iraq's invasion of Kuwait—now we expect it to be 9 to 9.5 per cent," says a Finance Ministry official. But few believe such optimism.

There will be cascading effects of the oil price hike, economists argue, since a rise in transport costs encourages traders to increase retail prices by disproportionately higher margins. An industry spokesman says he expects wholesale prices to go up more than 11 per cent—which was the rise during the drought year of 1987-88. "It could even be 20 per cent," he predicts.

The prices of a wide range of commodities are going to be affected. For the well-off, air fares have been hiked by around 25 per cent this year. But the common man won't be spared. All products using petrochemicals—from plastic buckets to tyres and synthetic fibres which go into fabrics—should go up by at least 10 per cent. If steel, coal and railway freight prices are not jacked up immediately, the concerned public sector organisations will find their losses mounting. This will indirectly boost the Government's deficit thus giving inflation a fillip.

Chart by B.K. SHARMA



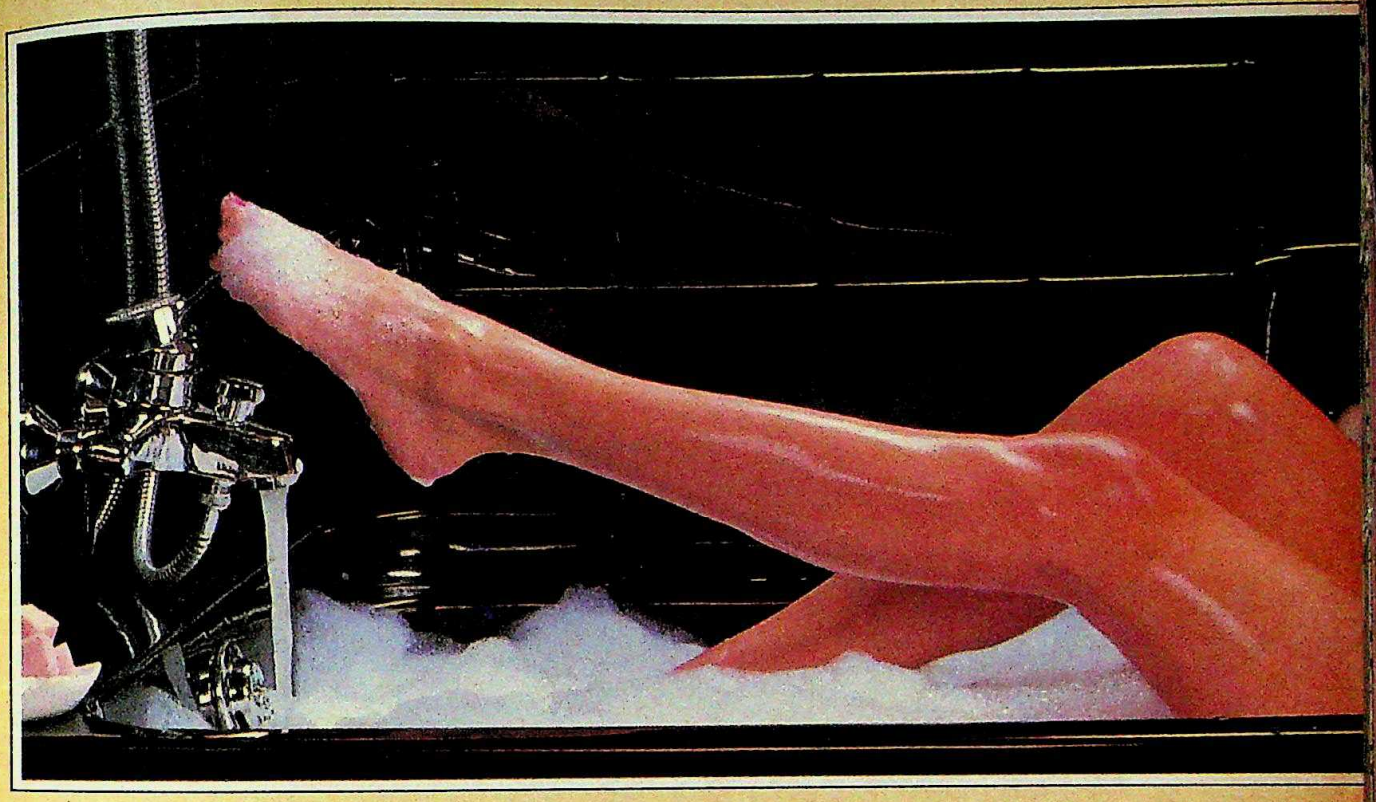
The signals that have gone out to the public so far are quite confusing. First Finance Minister Madhu Dandavate claimed there would be a 15 per cent 'cut' in oil supplies. The announcement led to panic buying—which was compounded by the strike of public sector employees. Later a Prime Minister's Office spokesman clarified that the so-called cut was actually a consumption reduction 'target' to be implemented over the next five and a half months and that the 25 per cent price hike would help achieve this target. In the midst of this melee, the Petroleum Ministry remained passive.

The first six months of 1990-91 saw petroleum consumption going up by 5 per cent (against 8 per cent in the corresponding period last year) and the Government still hopes to peg consumption at last year's level. Yet it has also realised the futility of imposing restrictions on the time pumps are allowed to operate and removed them.

Predictably, these to-and-fro pronouncements irked businessmen no end. The Confederation of Engineering Industry President V. Srinivasan accused the Government

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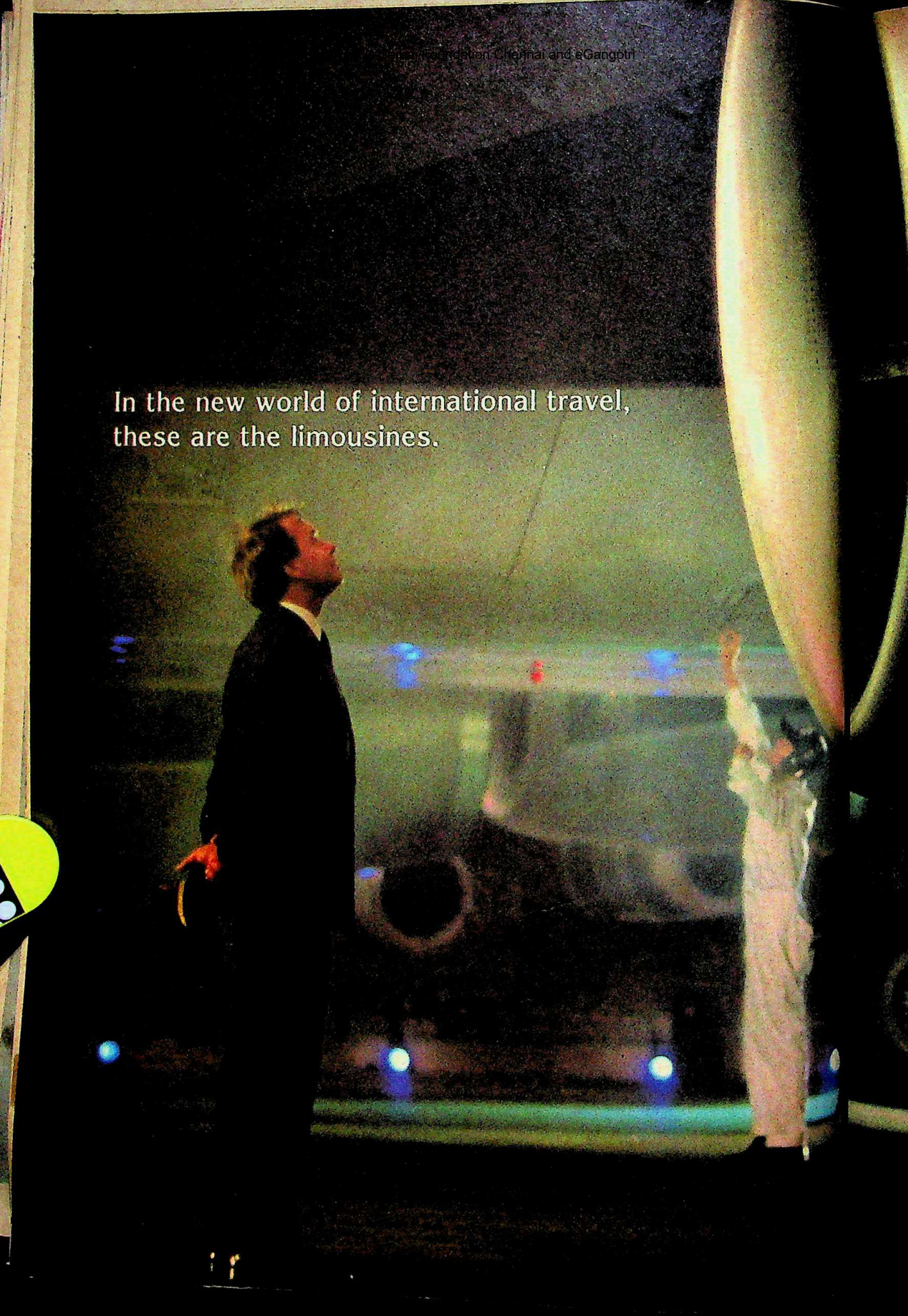


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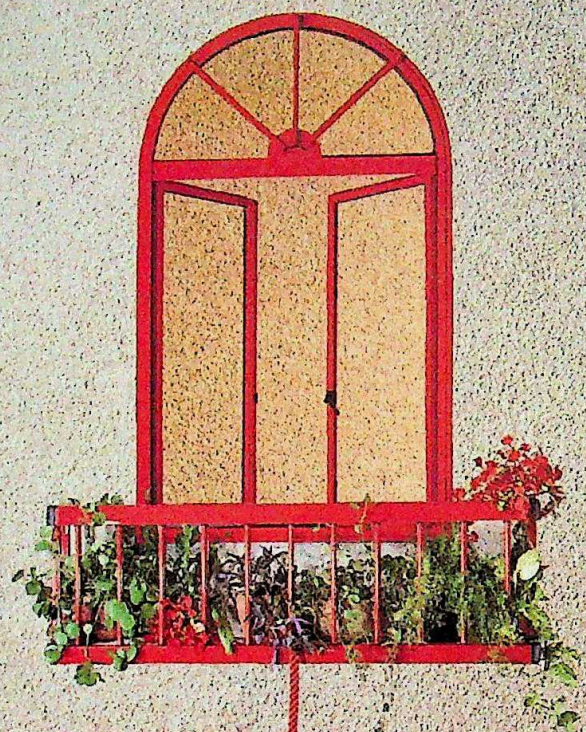
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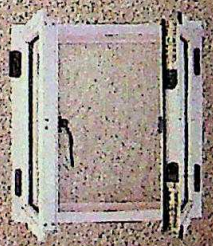
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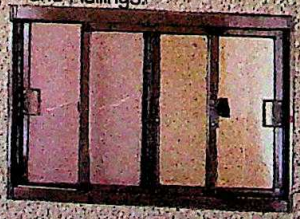


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of taking "ad hoc" and "knee-jerk" decisions and complained that industry was not being adequately associated with the economic crisis management.

There were other anomalies as well. Dandavate said kerosene (which the poor use) and liquified petroleum gas (LPG) supplies would be exempt from supply cuts as would defence. The export sector and naphtha for fertilizer production were later added to this list. Why then were kerosene prices increased, and not LPG? The Government claims if this was not done, kerosene would almost disappear because more and more of it would be adulterated with diesel and petrol. But there's another, less-charitable explanation. The Government didn't want to antagonise the vocal urban middle classes—who are agitated over the Mandal Commission—any further by jacking up LPG prices.

The Gulf surcharge will boost the Central Government's coffers by an extra Rs 2,300 crore but this won't be shared by the states. One section of the Government is opposed to removing the surcharge even if world oil prices decline, as they may. It wants to follow the example of the Rajiv regime which used the oil industry's surplus to shore up budget deficits and didn't pass on the benefit of lower world oil prices to domestic consumers.

And the view of this section is likely to prevail. For the Government's finances are messy. An official press note claims that the fiscal deficit during April-July this year was Rs 1,500 crore lower than what it was during the corresponding period last year. But this was before the Gulf crisis. And these statistics do not reveal the full picture. Consider the Reserve Bank's figures which state that net bank credit to the Government—an index of the extra money being pumped into the economy—went up by nearly Rs 21,000 crore between end-June this year and end-June last year.

IN other words, contrary to what officialdom says, the Government will find it tough to contain money supply. Minister of State for Finance Anil Shastri has said that this year's deficit may cross Rs 10,000 crore against the budgeted Rs 7,200 crore.

This figure may well be crossed. Defence expenditure is certain to exceed the budget estimate. And food and fertilizer subsidies may be higher than the budget figure by at least Rs 1,500 crore this year, admits a highly-placed bureaucrat. Yet, ironically, after the third successive favourable monsoon, farmers remain dissatisfied with the very same government who waived their loans and handsomely hiked procurement prices. Says Bakhtawar Singh, a farmer at Pilakhwa, Uttar Pradesh: "The diesel price hike will neutralise the gains we got earlier this year from higher procurement prices—on the contrary there will be an additional burden on us."

Panic buying of petrol in the capital



The Government hoped inflation would be contained at 7 per cent before the Gulf crisis. Now it says it will be 9 per cent. But the figure may well be close to 15 per cent.

As psychological expectations of hyper-inflation become stronger, the Government has run out of options. Measures like revaluation of official gold stocks are cosmetic changes symptomatic of a weak economy. (The Reserve Bank's gold stocks are currently valued at almost 26 times lower than the prevailing world prices.)

The industry scenario is slightly different. Figures available for the April-September period show that industrial production went up by 13 per cent. And recently announced half-yearly results of companies indicate that profit margins have not been eroded. Still, the growth rates of import-dependent industries—such as those producing automobiles, consumer electronics and computers—are bound to come down on account of the reduction in foreign exchange allocations. And the impact will come next summer. "The pressures on prices will pick up after March," says V.P. Chitale, director, Associated Chambers of Commerce.

Describing the Government's relatively moderate success at controlling prices after it came to power last December, Prime Minister V.P. Singh said prices are like toothpaste. Once you squeeze it out, you can't put it back. No, it won't be toothpaste prices which will bring this Government down. But the rising prices of some other commodities will accelerate the process. Recall what sugar prices meant for the rulers last year. And what onion prices did to Indira Gandhi's poll campaign in 1980. What will it be this time when elections are held? Onions again? Or edible oils? In any case, the National Front is bound to swallow a large dose of its own bitter medicine.

—PARANJOY GUHA THAKURTA with HARPAL SINGH and bureau reports

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INDIAN INSTITUTE OF MANAGEMENT CALCUTTA

announces

3rd International Conference on 'Marketing and Development'

Taj Palace Inter Continental, New Delhi

January 4-7, 1991

Registration : January 4, 11-00 a.m.—5-30 p.m.

Indian Institute of Management Calcutta, in collaboration with University of Rhode Island, and Network of Marketing and Development, USA, is organising an International Conference which will focus on Marketing and Development as the major theme. In the Conference, parallel technical sessions will discuss a number of research papers contributed by scholars from all over the world examining various key issues pertinent to the central theme. In addition, special panels will debate specific topics including Indian perspective on Marketing and Development.

Some eminent national and international scholars such as Professors Philip Kotler, Jagdish Seth, Gerald Zaltman, Everett Rogers, Russel Belk, Stanley Shapiro, Ruby Roy Dholakia, Nikhilesh Dholakia, Kiran Bothra, Sudas Roy, Rakesh Khurana and Mr. Subrata Sengupta, Dr. Pradip Kakkar and Mr. S.L. Rao, have already confirmed their participation in this Conference. In addition, a host of national and international academicians, professional marketing practitioners and planners will also participate. This Conference will provide an unique opportunity for presentation of research work and sharing of knowledge and experiences among the academicians, planners and executives.

Participation :

Academicians, Planners and Professional Marketing Executives and those who are concerned about the main issues related to the major theme of the Conference are eligible to participate in this Conference. Acceptance of applications for the participation will be decided on first-cum-first served basis.

Fees :

It is decided to charge a fee of Rs. 4,000.00 (non-academic) and Rs. 2,000.00(academic) to cover a part of the cost for organising this Conference. This will cover tea/coffee, lunches, dinners and Conference materials. A Patrons Committee representing a few major industrial houses of India has agreed to partly finance the cost of this Conference through various sponsorship schemes.

Those who are interested to participate should forward a Demand Draft in favour of Indian Institute of Management Calcutta. The covering letter enclosing the Demand Draft should mention the name (s) of the participants, organisational affiliation, designation, age, sex and dietary preference. This should be addressed to **Professor Kiran Bothra, Co-Chair Person & Professor of Marketing, Indian Institute of Management Calcutta, Joka, Diamond Harbour Road, Post Box No. 16757, Alipore Post Office, Calcutta—700 027, latest by November 30, 1990.**

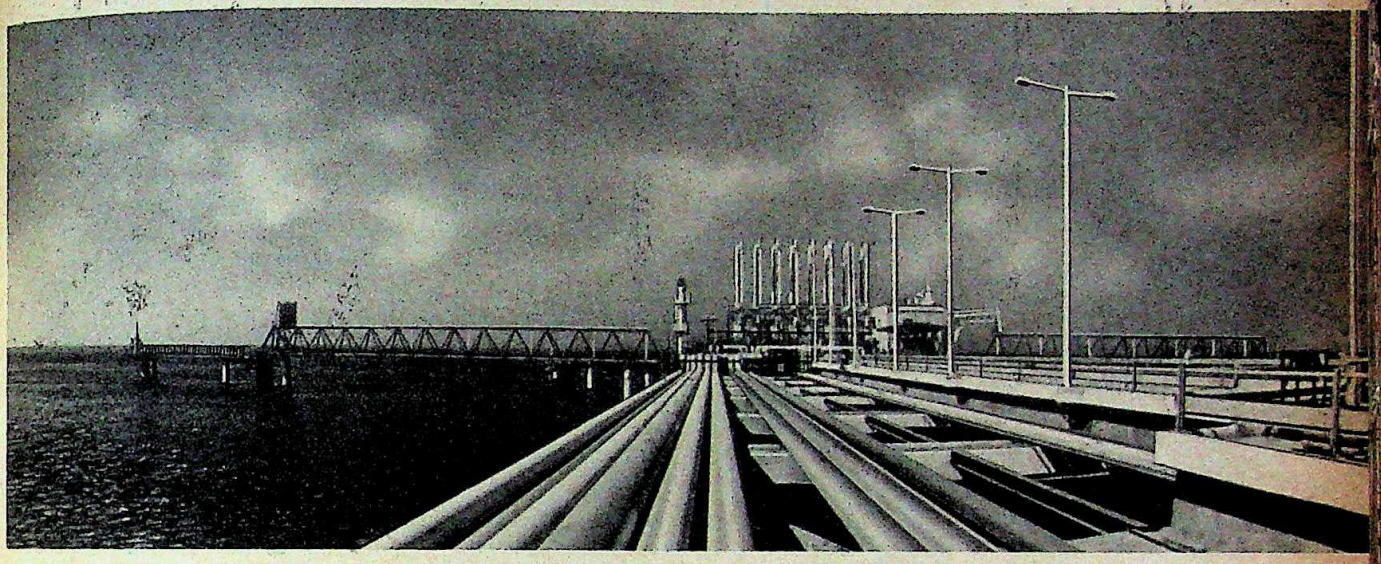
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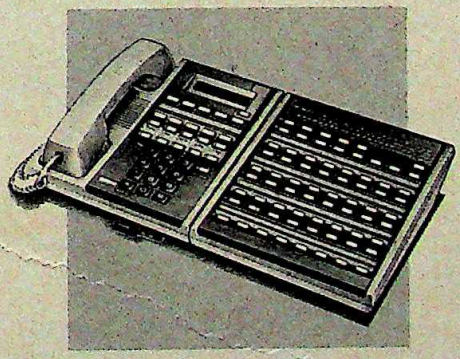
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COLOUR TELEVISIONS

Fading Out

Unexpected slump in sales

IF it is put down in black and white, the picture looks indeed grim: colour televisions are not selling.

The facts: manufacturers of Texla colour television sets cut down their production by 15 per cent in the last three months. The state-owned Uptron India Ltd fears that its profitability might get affected this year due to the slackening of demand. And Disco Electronics, which makes Telly colour TVs is cutting down even on travel expenses in order to reduce overheads in its Delhi factory.

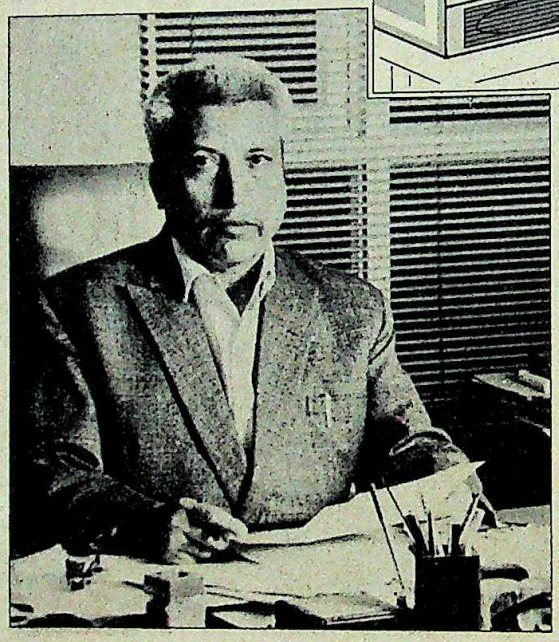
Texla, Uptron and Disco are just a few examples of TV manufacturers who have never had it so tough. The boom times in the above Rs 1,000 crore colour television industry have ended. Says A.N. Sehgal, president of the Indian TV Manufacturers Association: "There is a lot of apprehension in the industry. A shake-out is inevitable."

No doubt there are a few big players like Onida, Videocon, and BPL—who are gaining market-shares at the expense of others. And their agressive marketing strategy and inovation in products have paid them off—they together control roughly half of the colour television market. Yet on the other hand nearly 25 colour TV makers of the 120 manufacturers who existed two years ago have stopped production or have reduced production drastically. The major reasons:

- With increasing competition, margins on colour TVs have been squeezed from 8 per cent just four years ago to a mere 1 per cent today.
- Excise duty on colour TV sets has gone up by a whopping 200 per cent between 1984 and 1989.
- Even the proposed Rs 600 excise duty for the 14 inch colour TV sets doubled by the time it hit the market—two years after the proposal was made.

Yet just a few years ago the picture portrayed by the Government could not have been rosier. It had estimated that the country would need as many as 2 million colour television sets by 1990. Colour television licences were doled out liberally and the total installed capacity went up to an incredible 4 million sets annually. This year the industry expects to produce only 1 million colour sets—a fall of 16 per cent compared to last year.

Why did the anticipated boom not take place? Says Pawan Kapur, executive director of the Rs 45 crore Beltek India Ltd: "The hike in the excise on colour, the lack of any popular programmes like the *Mahabharat*, the stock exchange boom leading to diversion of money have all led to a fall in demand." Cash problems are there too. If in 1986 dealers paid in advance for the sets, today they want credit. "Our cost of money has gone up by 3 per cent," says a manufacturer.

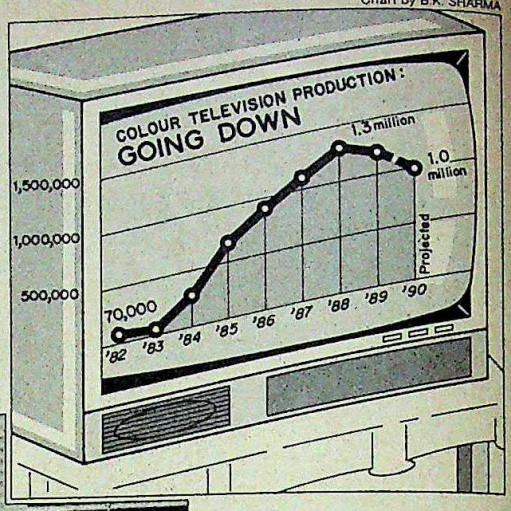


Sehgal, president TV Manufacturers Association: tough times ahead

Worse is the way in which makers of low-cost colour sets were elbowed out of the market by a destructive taxing policy—the differential duty for sets with an ex-factory price of Rs 5000 was removed. "By equalising the duties on all kinds of colour sets they have virtually knocked out this lower segment of the market," says M. Bharara, managing director of Disco electronics.

They are not the only ones who are finding the market sticky. Creative Electronics, manufacturers of Choice television, three months ago shifted their entire efforts towards exports.

Chart by B.K. SHARMA



Uptron which had decided to develop an indigenous design for their colour television sets discovered that they had lost out to new entrants who were trumpeting their foreign technical collaborator's brand name. Admits K. Bhushan, managing director of Uptron: "We had to pay a commercial price for indigenising."

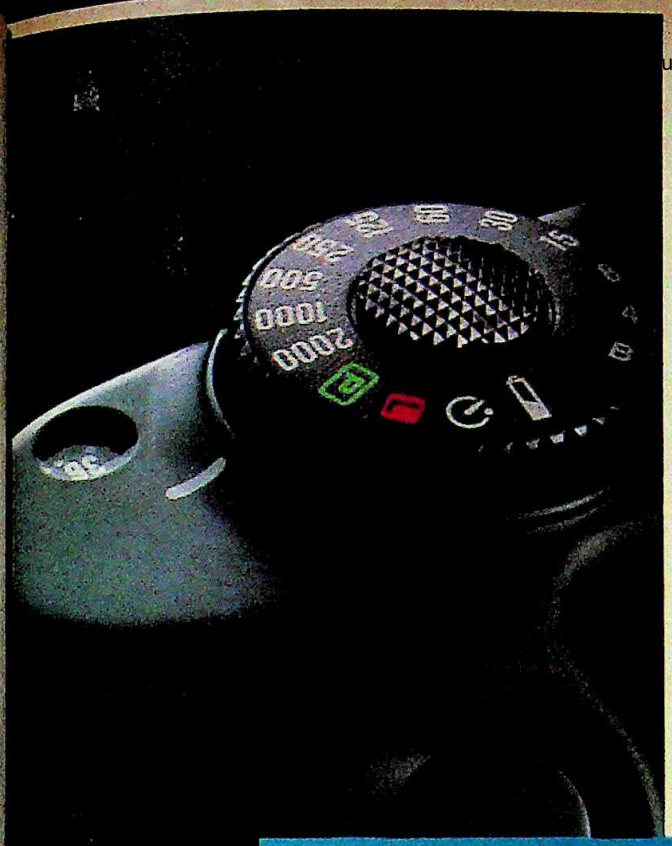
Televista found that its image as a black and white television manufacturer was a handicap in its effort to move into the colour TV market. Chairman and Managing Director V.P. Luthra points out that they made the mistake of not selling their colour television sets under a different brand name. To reduce dependence on television, Televista now is getting into computers and refrigerators which they hope will constitute 50 per cent of their turnover in the next three years.

Yet those who have made a niche for themselves in the marketplace have done so primarily by being ahead in the race. For instance Monica Electronics which manufactures Onida, a leading brand, took the market by storm by introducing slick vertical television sets—virtually the first time in the country. This was backed up of course by an aggressivr advertising campaign which constitutes as much as 2 per cent of the company's turnover. Of course with the market becoming tougher many others are recouping with new strategies knowing too well that many more companies will soon have to switch off their act. For the industry, there appears to be no light at the end of the tube.

—SURAJEET DAS GUPTA

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ZEN AND THE ART OF MOTORCYCLE MADNESS

"From the top of the ghats I can see the lone tree on the beach below. I can also see the guy on the black Yamaha sneer at me. I can never resist a race. I pop the clutch. My front wheel paws the grey morning air. Our bikes scream down from mountain to sea. Then suddenly I am alone. Who won? Who lost? Who cares?"



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WASHING MACHINES

Clean Sweep

A boom is in the offing

FOR years, home appliance manufacturers have tried to promote a certain image of the middle class Indian housewife: efficient, attractive and surrounded by labour-saving devices. If the sudden upsurge in the washing machine market is any indication, the time may have finally come when housewives take to this image in large numbers.

As with most products manufactured by both the organised and the small-scale sectors, reliable and up-to-date statistics on the number of washing machines sold in India are not available. But there are several other indicators that washing machines, like refrigerators, are becoming an essential fixture in many middle class homes. Today more than a dozen prominent, heavily advertised brands are nudging each other for space in department stores, with the two latest entrants—TVS Whirlpool and IFB Bosch—boasting of tie-ups with major US and German manufacturers respectively.

Industry observers estimate that nearly 175,000 automatic and semi-automatic washing machines worth approximately Rs 120 crore will be sold in India this year. And demand is growing by more than 30 per cent annually. "The potential market for washing machines is tremendous—about 400,000 annually for low-cost twin tubs, and 100,000 for the automatic ones," says Pradipkumar N. Dhoot of Videocon, which has quickly dominated the market with its Matsushita-designed machines.

"The washing machine now signifies both convenience and status for the busy housewife. Market surveys show that it is the next major buy on many family shopping lists," observes Sanjay Badhe of Consumer Focus, a market-research agency. The growing popularity of the electronic tub follows the boom in refrigerator production, which more than tripled in the '80s to cross the million mark. Now major department store chains like Akbarallys in Bombay report higher sales of washing machines (150 per month) than refrigerators (100 per month). "The response to washing machines is reminiscent of the way mixers caught people's imagination in the '70s. We are witnessing the beginning of the washing machine revolution," says Ismail Unwala, purchase manager of Akbarallys.

And with the revolution has come the inevitable turmoil. Less than a decade ago, washing machines made by small-scale units in Ambala or Delhi, disdainfully dismissed today as "lassi-makers", consisted basically of a propeller inside a drum with rollers mounted on top for squeezing out the water. These are still available in the market at prices below Rs 3,000. But Saviour, Racold and Sumeet ushered in the automatic era four years ago with modern, front-loading, tumble wash machines, where the entire drum rotates at varying speeds to launder the clothes.

Soon Videocon came out with the National top-loading machines using the impeller system, where only the base of the drum rotates to churn and wash. Now TVS Whirlpool and Goa's Magic Wash have the agitator system, in which the drum base rotates both clockwise and anti-clockwise during the wash cycle. Hardly had the Indian consumer decided to buy a washing machine when he was confronted with a choice of three different systems—the impeller which is popular in Japan, the tumbler in Europe, and the agitator in the US. Ultimately, as in other countries, one system will probably dominate the market.

Videocon appears to have won the first round for the top-loading impeller system by grabbing the biggest share of the market, typically through an extremely aggressive advertising and sales drive. However the crucial factor is its lower prices—less than Rs 11,000 for the automatic and under Rs 7,000 for the semi-automatic. It thus completely outflanked both its early, tumble wash competitors—Racold, whose Philco Italy machine now costs approximately Rs 18,000, and Sumeet, which is having problems pegging its price around Rs 14,000. Now the giant TVS group from Tamil Nadu has joined the battle with its top-loading agitator Whirlpool, also priced around Rs 11,000. "Most consumers are looking for a low-priced, convenient-sized machine, and the first company which can sell a fully automatic one for under Rs 8,000 will capture the market," observes Unwala.

But, for the present, the market promises to get even more crowded and confusing. Besides engineering giants like Crompton Greaves, Batliboi and Rallis which are already marketing washing machines, half a dozen electronic and home appliance companies are expected to soon come out with their own brands, among them Weston, BPL, Onida, Kelvinator, Video Electronics and Singer. So washing machines promise to become as essential a fixture in middle class homes in the '90s as mixers and refrigerators were during the past two decades. *Dhobis* are going to see a sharp fall in business.

—M. RAHMAN

Washing machines: wide choice

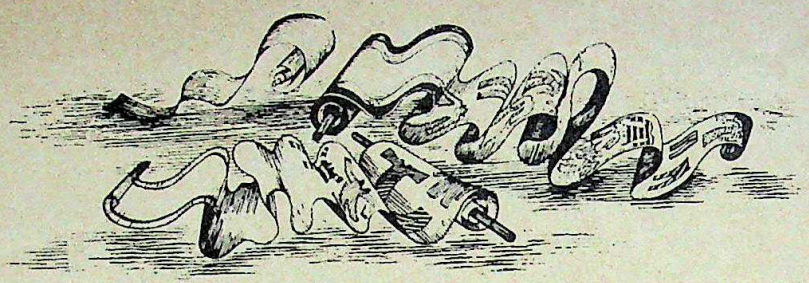
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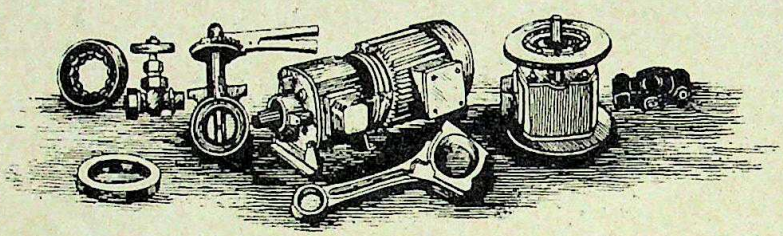
The '90s will see the washing machine as an essential fixture in middle class homes.

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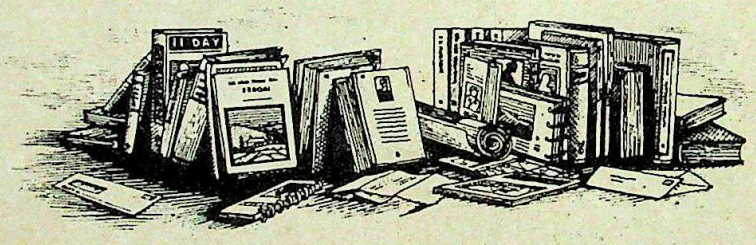
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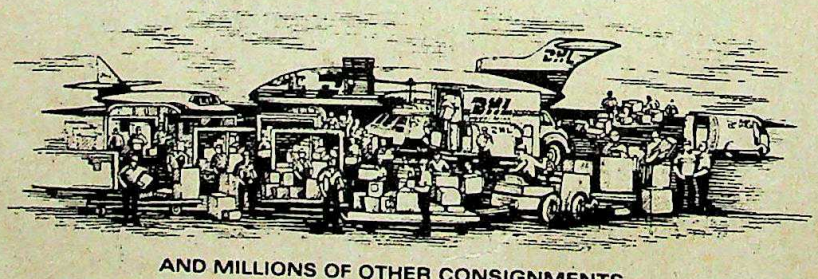
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RESERVE BANK OF INDIA

Changing Role

Central bank begins to assert itself

THE Bombay headquarters of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI)—the country's central monetary authority—bears an uncanny resemblance to an ivory tower. Tall and majestic, it appears almost impenetrable from the outside. Until recently, the keepers of India's financial system who inhabit this imposing building seemed impervious and unmoved by the amazingly rapid advances that were taking place in the world of banking and finance. Now, things have begun to change.

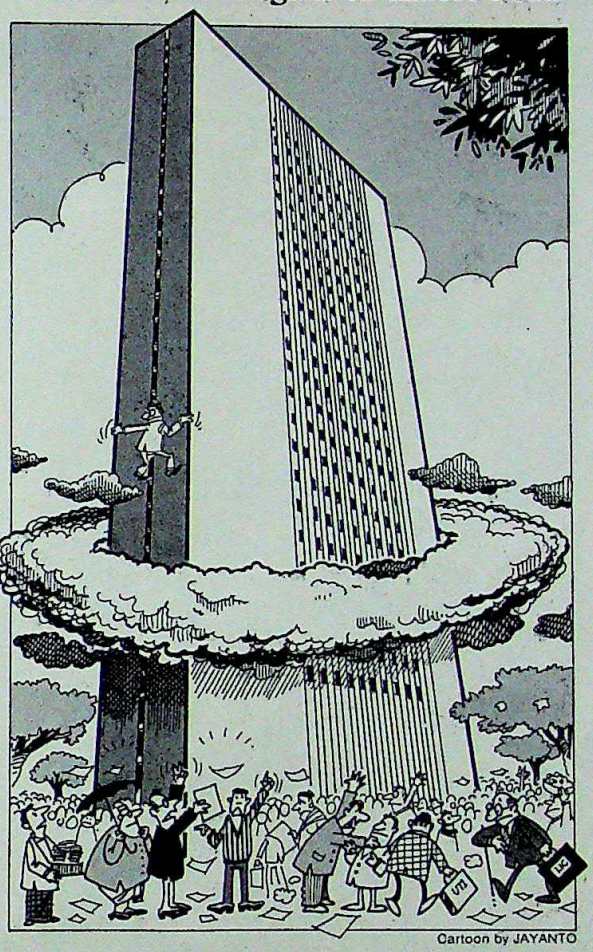
It recently stirred a hornet's nest when it announced that it was setting up a special cell to gather information on financial institutions and insurance corporations. The RBI argues that it is necessary for it to monitor more closely the financial flows of institutions if it is to do its job better, namely, shape the country's monetary and credit policies. And it has its supporters.

Says M.G. Diwan, the recently-appointed chairman of the Life Insurance Corporation, one of the institutions that will come under the purview of the cell: "The RBI is entitled to keep tabs on us and we are confident that they will not interfere in our work but instead provide us guidance." He adds that monitoring overlapping sources of money supply is becoming very important for the RBI since these fund flows are substantial.

Still, the decision to set up the cell has divided the financial fraternity, with one section accusing the RBI of power-grabbing and empire-building. Instead of merely collecting data, apprehend its critics, the cell may interfere in the working of the institutions.

Notes the head of a financial institution wryly: "With the Reserve Bank, what it sets out doing and what it actually does are often poles apart." He cites the instance of the decision to do away with the Credit Authorisation Scheme. This decision was ostensibly implemented to enable the RBI to have a better idea of banks' lending patterns. But the scheme became a tool of patronage in the hands of the RBI, the institution chief claims.

A banker cribs that while the central bank constantly expresses concern about the health of the Indian banking system, "it is at best a silent spectator, hardly an active player". Moreover, the RBI is alleged to have failed in both its developmental as well as regulatory functions as a central bank.



Cartoon by JAYANTO

The dizzying pace of changes in the financial environment can no longer be resisted by the RBI.

As a senior government official observes: "For the first time since nationalisation in 1969, at least eight out of the country's 21 public sector banks are sick or on the verge of sickness." He further adds that the Unit Trust of India, the Industrial Development Bank of India and the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development all grew much faster after they were removed "from the RBI's clutches".

Another issue related to the changing role of the RBI is that in the present scheme of things, the Banking Division in the Ministry of Finance intermediates between the RBI and the Government. While Governor R.N. Malhotra is careful not to rock the boat in public and only says that the relationship between the RBI and the division might be "usefully reviewed", there are others in the RBI who argue that the Banking Division with its 250-strong staffers has outlived its use and needs to be scrapped. To add grist to the mill, Prime Minister V.P. Singh has himself recently argued in private that the Banking Division's duties of safeguarding the Government's ownership interests in banks could be performed by the RBI, an idea he had mooted when he was finance minister.

But bureaucrats in the division feel that such a drastic cure may prove far worse than the disease. An official secretariat is needed, they argue, to answer the numerous questions raised in Parliament besides drafting amendments of laws. Winding up the division will not help as the RBI will become a less-autonomous organ of the Government and one of its four deputy governors may have to be permanently stationed in the capital, it is felt.

In recent times, banks and financial institutions have broad-based their activities—into new areas like merchant banking and mutual funds and emerged as major players in the stock-markets. The money markets too have opened up and become wider and deeper. New financial instruments such as commercial paper and certificates of deposit have been introduced. Institutions aimed at imparting stability to short-term money markets, such as the Discount and Finance House of India, have been set up. There has also

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been rationalisation of the interest rate structure of banks. And the process of disintermediation—which implies that the corporate sector is depending less on traditional sources of funds—continues rapidly.

To an extent, the RBI has sought to adapt itself to the changing scenario and this is evident from the elements of de-regulation contained in the recently-announced credit policy for the busy season. Some argue that the changes that have taken place in the bankers' bank were dictated by circumstances and that the fast-moving forces in the financial environment in the country were too strong for even a dowdy dowager like the RBI to resist. Others argue that the RBI bosses are becoming more dynamic than before and that Governor R.N. Malhotra, now into his sixth year of office, has been responsible for the venerable institution shedding some of its bureaucratic garb (*see interview*). But this is debatable. Clearly, Malhotra will have to push things along at a faster pace in order to maintain the momentum of deregulation.

—SHIV TANEJA with bureau reports

R.N. MALHOTRA

"We don't want to interfere"

AN IAS officer who has done stints with the International Monetary Fund and World Bank, 69-year-old Ram Narain Malhotra's stewardship of RBI *since 1985 has aroused mixed responses. Excerpts from an interview with Senior Correspondent* SHIV TANEJA.

Q: *Isn't the special cell seeking to gather information which is already available with the* RBI?

A: Its main job is to collect information which is of interest to the central banking authority in order to observe the credit flows in the system. Right now most of the information that is collected is for our annual report. It is not well structured or focused.

Q: *This move is seen as an attempt by the* RBI *to have greater control over financial institutions...*

A: No. I think the RBI would like to maintain the autonomy of the institutions. But it has to also perform its functions as the monetary authority. It is important—this is an issue becoming important world-wide—to maintain the quality of assets. To say the central monetary authority should only look at banks, begs a question: aren't there other players in the system who are not banks but try to act like them? Who should look after them?

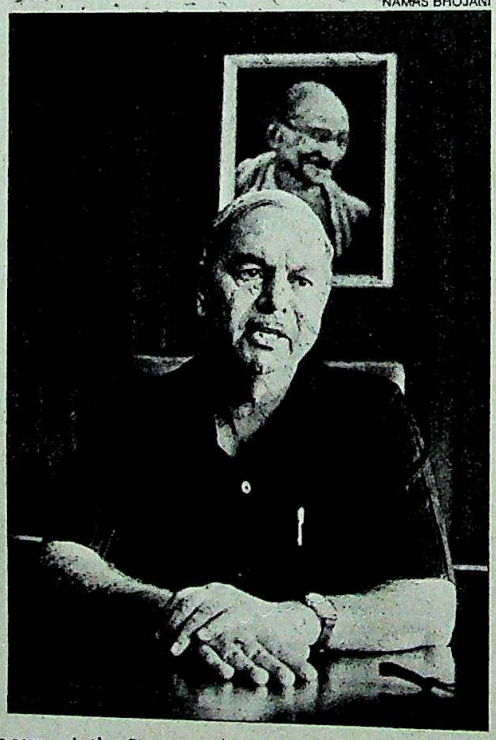
Q: *The criticism is that the* RBI *is unable to manage its existing activities. For example eight sick banks.*

A: You're assuming something which we haven't put forward.

Q: *Should the* RBI *be completely autonomous of the Banking Division of the Ministry of Finance?*

A: You must bear in mind that the Government is the owner of all the nationalised banks and therefore it has certain functions which are ownership related. The other aspect is the Government's responsibility as a policy-making body and its interface with Parliament. So it cannot be that the Government's functions as a policy-maker and an owner be all transferred (to the RBI). But certainly, if one is talking of the autonomy of the banks, it might be useful to review matters.

NAMAS BHOJANI



Q: *Is a devaluation of the Indian Rupee on the cards?*

A: I rule it out totally.

Q: *How bad is the battering taken by the country's international credit rating?*

A: There is going to be some increase in the cost of money. It may not be large. The cost of financing will go up marginally. But you must remember that the rating we have is still a good rating.

Q: *What still needs to be done to open up the financial sector?*

A: I think our major concerns are systemic. Interest rates is the one area that has been associated in the public mind with liberalisation. It is a complex area, so if you are looking for a completely deregulated regime of interest rates then it will be problematic.

Q: *Are any major structural changes in the banking system in the offing?*

A: We are interested in developing the whole system, and therefore we do not consider disintermediation bad. Left to ourselves, we would like to see greater development of the capital markets and other financial services. But the real issue insofar as the financial system is concerned, particularly the banks, is how they will become strong participants in this process and whether the present policy framework inhibits that process.

Q: *How much does North Block interfere in the working of the* RBI?

A: The RBI has had very good relations with North Block. But our major point of debate is that the present system of automatic financing of the deficit is a handicap to the monetary function.

Q: *Is the* RBI *today more powerful than it was before?*

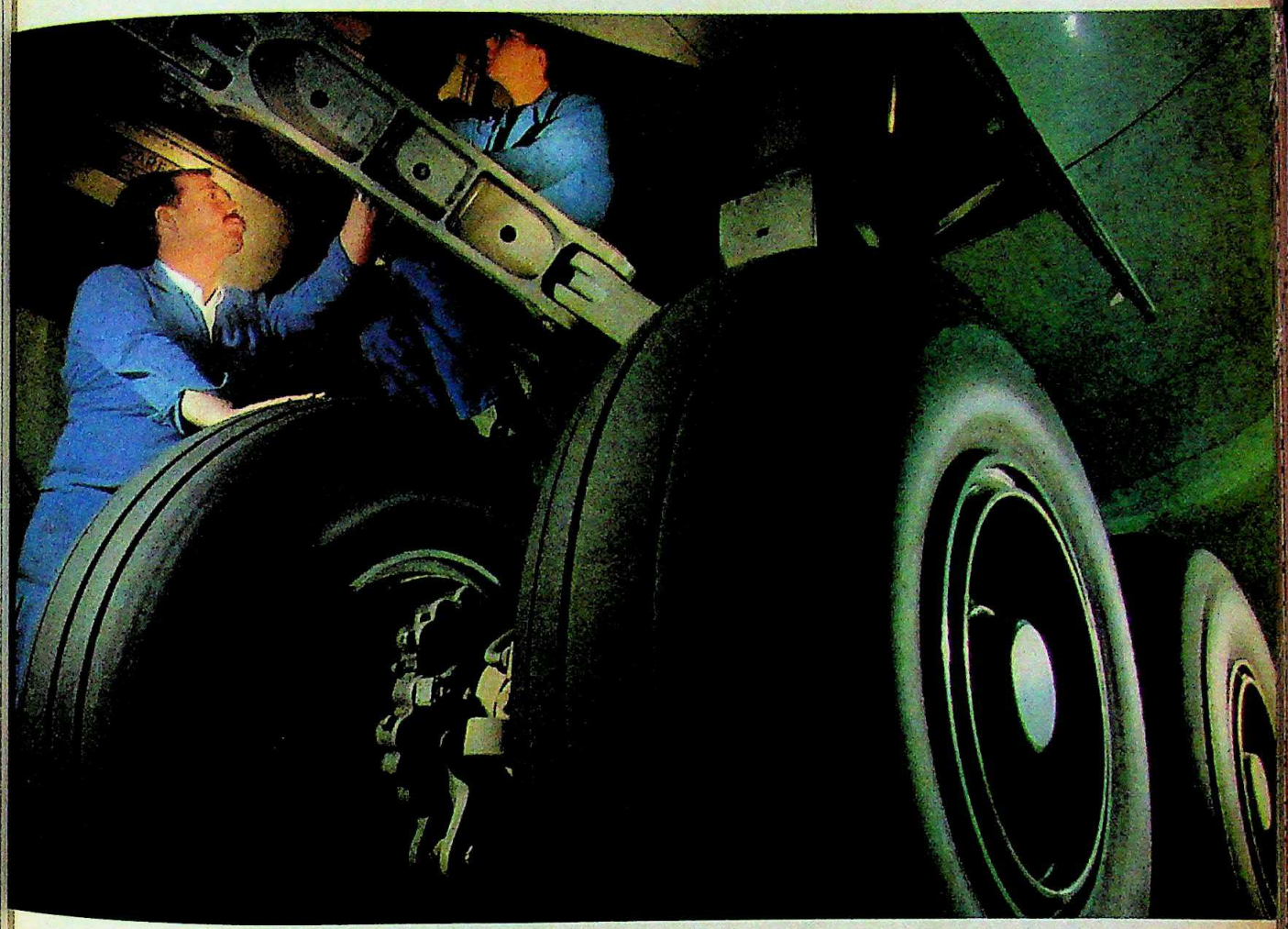
A: It is not a matter of power but a matter of ability to perform the functions that have been entrusted to you by statute. I think we are trying to do that.

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We have people who check the people who check the people who check your aircraft.



You might well call it excessive German thoroughness that we don't let our technicians work unsupervised on an aircraft until they have completed four years' basic training and have at least eight years' practical experience.
It goes without saying, however, that their work is still inspected by an even more experienced technician who, in turn, is checked by a highly qualified engineer. And, after all that, there is the independent inspector from the technical control department who reports directly to the Board of Management.
We call this Lufthansa's contribution to inflight relaxation – it's something we simply owe you and ourselves.

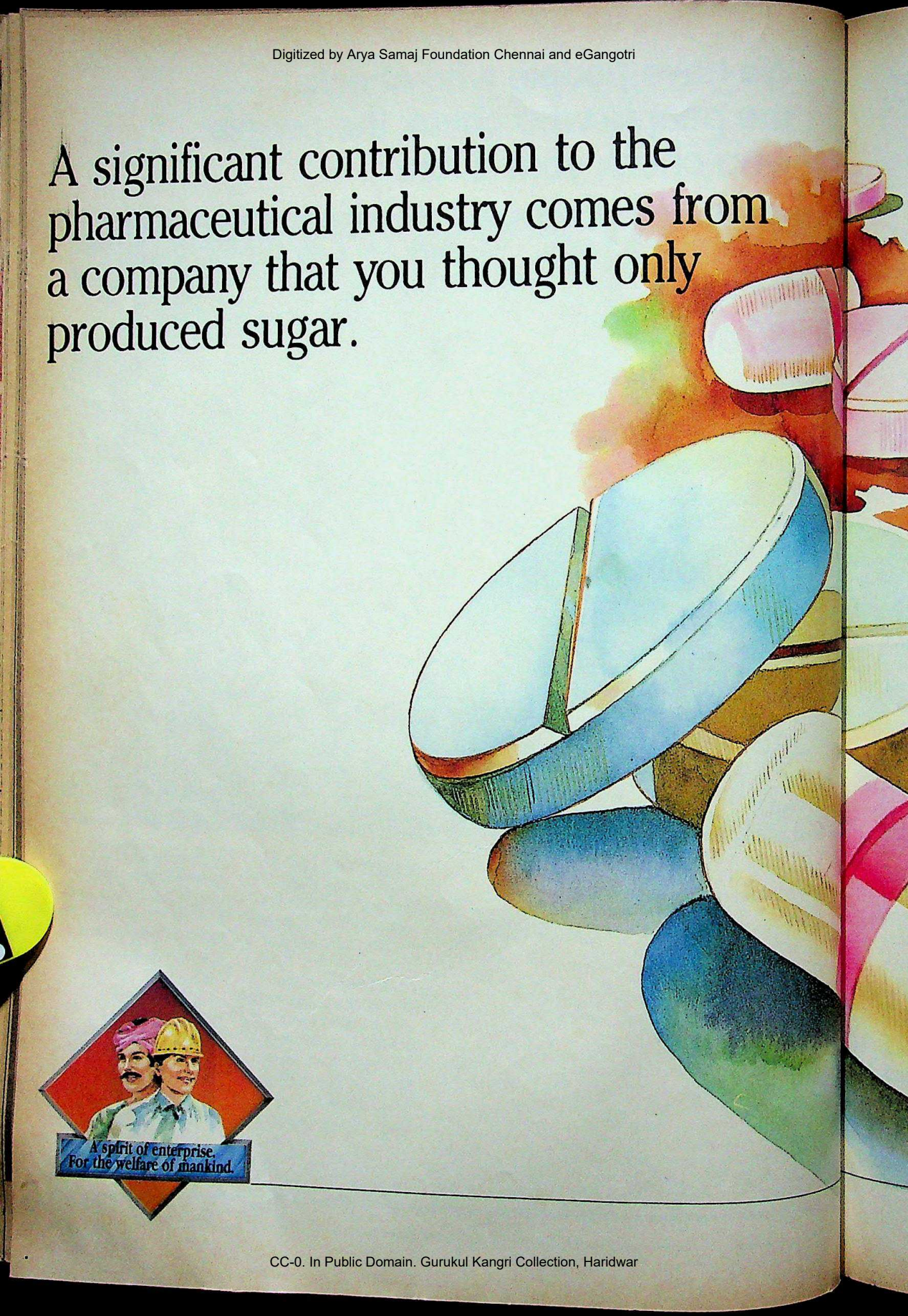
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Lufthansa

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A significant contribution to the pharmaceutical industry comes from a company that you thought only produced sugar.



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The Andhra Sugars. A company over four decades old, that has earned ample credit as one of the top performers in the sugar industry. In 1962, a distillery was set up to manufacture industrial alcohol from molasses - a renewable raw material.

In the very same year, chemical plants were set up to produce acetic acid, acetic anhydride and later ethyl acetate. The Swedish technology adapted was improved upon, and proved cost effective. These chemicals are intermediaries for the pharmaceutical industry.

The Andhra Sugars is also the first Indian company to develop indigenous technology for the manufacture of Aspirin in India. Today, The Andhra Sugars contributes a major share to the quantum of Aspirin produced in the country.

At the inorganic chemicals complex at Kovvur, several chemicals such as sulphuric acid, caustic soda, caustic potash, chlorine, hydrochloric acid, chlorosulphonic acid, alum, and a fertilizer - superphosphate are produced. They find wide application in industries ranging from pharmaceuticals to pesticides, power plants to paints.

The Andhra Sugars is distinctive as the only company in India and one of the handful worldwide, to produce Unsymmetrical Dimethyl Hydrazine (UDMH) and Monomethyl Hydrazine (MMH), rocket fuel, for India's space effort, with know-how from Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO).

Four decades have changed the face of The Andhra Sugars. From a company that began with a sugar factory to a corporate enterprise that thrives on innovation. Soon, The Andhra Sugars will be diversifying into oils, soaps and petrochemicals. Now, this multi-crore conglomerate looks towards its golden jubilee year with keen anticipation and a renewed sense of commitment to industry. And progress.

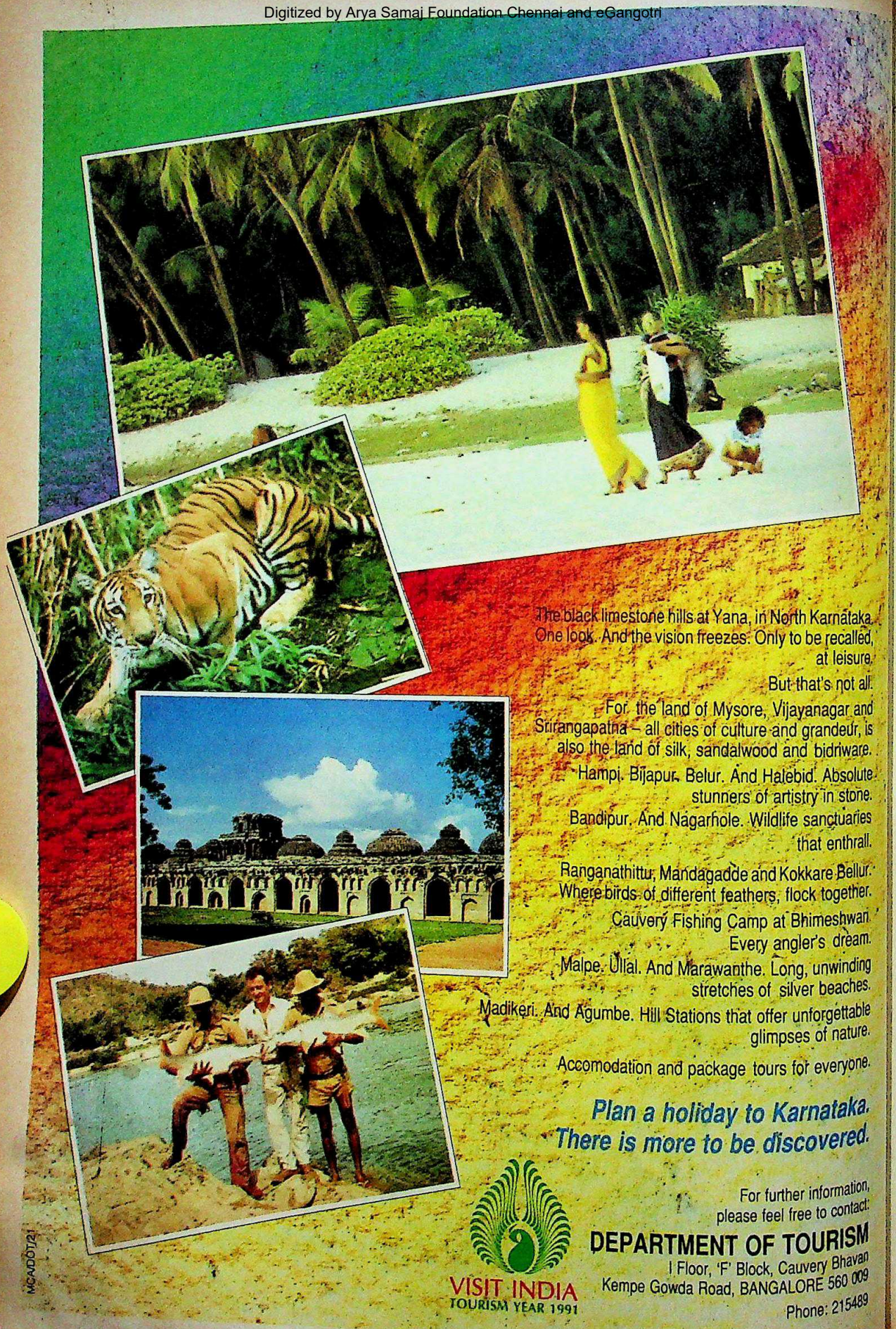
THE ANDHRA SUGARS LTD. TANUKU

THE ANDHRA SUGARS LTD.

Venkatarayapuram
Tanuku (West Godavari Dist.) Andhra Pradesh

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The black limestone hills at Yana, in North Karnataka. One look. And the vision freezes. Only to be recalled, at leisure.

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Hampi. Bijapur. Belur. And Halebid. Absolute stunners of artistry in stone.

Bandipur. And Nagarhole. Wildlife sanctuaries that enthrall.

Ranganathittu, Mandagadde and Kokkare Bellur. Where birds of different feathers, flock together.

Cauvery Fishing Camp at Bhimeshwari. Every angler's dream.

Malpe. Ullal. And Marawanthe. Long, unwinding stretches of silver beaches.

Madikeri. And Agumbe. Hill Stations that offer unforgettable glimpses of nature.

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THE MARKETS

Dismal Mood

Political chaos affects trade

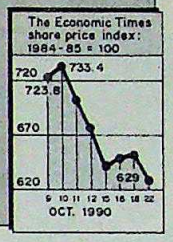
THE only thing certain last fortnight was uncertainty, particularly of the political variety. And for a change, the upheavals in the country's capital were being reflected on stock exchanges. Most share markets were closed on October 23, the day the BJP leader L.K. Advani was arrested, and there was negligible dealing on the kerb. Though selected blue-chip scrips recovered modestly late that evening—with Tata Steel going up from Rs 175 to Rs 191 and Reliance increasing from Rs 155 to Rs 167—the Bombay Stock Exchange (BSE) authorities were not taking too many chances.

An emergency meeting of the BSE's governing board decided that forward trading would be temporarily banned to prevent hard hammering by bears, which seems most likely. But with news that Advani's arrest was imminent, the BSE was uneasy and this was reflected on the BSE 30-share sensitive index: it crashed 88 points to 1,223.40, bringing the first full day of trading in the new Samvat year (2,047) to a gloomy end.

Chart by B.K. SHARMA

THE LOSERS — % decline in share prices between Oct. 9-22, 1990

Orkay Silk Mills	42.5%
Reliance Industries	30.4%
Standard Mills	28.6%
Tata Steel	28.3%
Bajaj Tempo	27.7%
L&T	26.2%
Hind Ciba	25.8%
Motor Industries	25%
Excel Ind.	24.2%
Baroda Rayon	23.2%



The big losers among the pivotals included Tata Steel which crashed from Rs 206 to Rs 190 following the unloading of some one lakh shares. In fact, many scrips in the forward list were quoting substantially lower. With this inauspicious start to the new year, the sensitive index had lost just under 380 points from the all-time high of 1602.64 on October 9.

The kick-off to the new year seemed to have set the tone for the short-term, which was one of caution. Despite the fact that the BSE ring was jam-packed, trading was rather thin and under Rs 100 crore worth of business was transacted on new year's day—well below last year's levels. It was expected that financial institutions and mutual funds would make their presence felt, but most market observers felt their involvement was token.

In a case of bad timing, SBI Mutual Funds is planning to launch its Magnum Multiplier Scheme in end-October. The scheme has not set a limit on the returns it hopes to give annually and its managers believe that it can equal or better the average annual return—of 25 per cent—which has been the trend so far.

Despite the uncertain political scenario, not everything looks gloomy. Analysts feel the markets still have strong fundamentals and good six monthly corporate results are continuing to flow in. On October 25, the markets had recovered with the BSE sensitive index picking up 76 points to close at 1,299.17. Reliance, came down from Rs 185 to Rs 167 between October 22 and 23, picked up to Rs 187 three days later. This was against a high of Rs 261 a week earlier.

For the time being, investors are hoping the happenings in Delhi do not rock the boat too much.

ACTIVE STOCKS

	1990 HIGH	LOW	CLOSE 22.10.90	Change in Fortnight
Ashok Leyland	126.50	69.50	110.00	11.00 –
Associated Cement	2415.00	325.00	2100.00	105.00 +
Asian Paints	305.00	207.50	252.50	15.00 –
Atlas Copco	68.00	32.50	50.00	nil
Bajaj Auto	770.00	355.00	620.00	100.00 –
Baroda Rayon	1925.00	617.50	1210.00	315.00 –
Bata India	104.00	62.50	97.00	3.00 –
Ballarpur	325.00	120.00	238.00	47.00 –
Birla Jute	205.00	50.50	180.00	15.00 +
Blow Plast	140.00	34.50	100.00	40.00 –
Bombay Dyeing	445.00	173.00	185.00	257.50 –*
Britannia Ind.	167.00	97.00	140.00	20.00 –
Brooke Bond	175.00	91.00	146.00	14.00 –
Cadbury India	192.50	133.75	165.00	11.25 –
Century Textiles	4750.00	2420.00	4125.00	400.00 –
Colgate Palmolive	360.00	176.25	290.00	46.25 –
Cyanamid	150.00	87.50	110.00	25.00 –
DCM	130.00	45.50	112.50	7.50 +
Dunlop	93.00	51.75	72.00	7.00 –
E.I. Hotels	65.25	50.00	57.50	2.50 –
Escorts	200.00	77.75	160.00	7.00 –
Finolex Cables	410.00	200.00	285.00	5.00 –
Garware Nylon	71.00	48.00	56.25	0.25 +
G.E. Shipping	54.75	34.50	37.00	4.50 –
G.S.F.C.	275.00	155.00	193.75	56.25 –
Grasim Ind.	277.50	106.00	197.50	47.50 –
Hind. Aluminium	417.50	205.00	315.00	40.00 –
Hind. Ciba	1900.00	960.00	1225.00	350.00 –
Hindustan Lever	172.50	101.00	135.00	22.50 –
Hindustan Motors	58.50	19.80	36.50	14.25 –
Hoechst	3400.00	1295.00	2450.00	700.00 –
ICI India Ltd.	72.00	35.25	54.00	12.00 –
Indian Organic	91.25	46.50	60.00	14.00 –
Indian Rayon	175.00	84.00	117.50	32.50 –**
Indrol	320.00	161.25	280.00	17.50 –
Ingersoll-Rand	305.00	190.00	250.00	50.00 –
ITC	182.00	48.75	137.00	30.00 –
J.K. Synthetics	90.00	49.00	65.00	10.00 –
Kinetic Engineering	255.00	130.00	190.00	35.00 –
Kirloskar Cummins	125.00	65.00	100.00	7.50 –
KSB Pumps	260.00	175.00	230.00	25.00 –
Larsen & Toubro	180.00	57.00	112.50	40.00 –
Lipton	112.00	65.00	75.00	20.00 –
LML Ltd.	83.75	15.00	50.00	18.75 –
Madura Coats	285.00	100.50	245.00	20.00 +
M&M	130.00	67.50	95.00	7.50 –
Milk Food	280.00	115.00	165.00	20.00 –
Motor Industries	1400.00	780.00	825.00	275.00 –**
Mukand Ltd.	275.00	127.00	212.50	15.00 –
National Organic	1900.00	1070.00	1375.00	225.00 –
Nestle India	172.50	101.75	140.00	16.00 –
Nirlon	42.50	13.00	25.00	8.00 –
Orkay Silk Mills	61.00	14.50	34.50	12.50 –
Pelco Electronics	78.00	24.00	62.00	11.50 –
Pfizer	113.75	60.00	65.00	10.00 –
Premier Auto	83.00	50.00	55.00	15.00 –**
Raymond	175.00	70.00	122.50	2.50 +**
Reckitt & Colman	270.00	178.00	250.00	10.00 –
Reliance Industries	245.00	50.00	167.00	31.50 –
Siemens India	162.50	96.00	130.00	7.50 –
Shaw Wallace	122.00	65.00	84.50	14.50 –
Shriram Fibres	74.00	43.00	58.50	2.50 –
SKF Bearings	2775.00	1240.00	2250.00	175.00 –***
SPIC	81.00	47.00	54.00	18.00 –
Tata Steel	275.00	103.25	190.00	36.50 –
Telco	272.50	110.00	210.00	25.00 –
Vam Organic	205.00	115.00	163.75	21.25 –
Videocon Int.	600.00	105.00	421.25	88.75 –
Voltas	145.00	63.00	110.00	27.50 –
Wimco	52.50	15.75	28.50	7.50 –

*Ex-bonus **Ex-dividend ***Ex-right

WORLD VALUE OF RUPEE

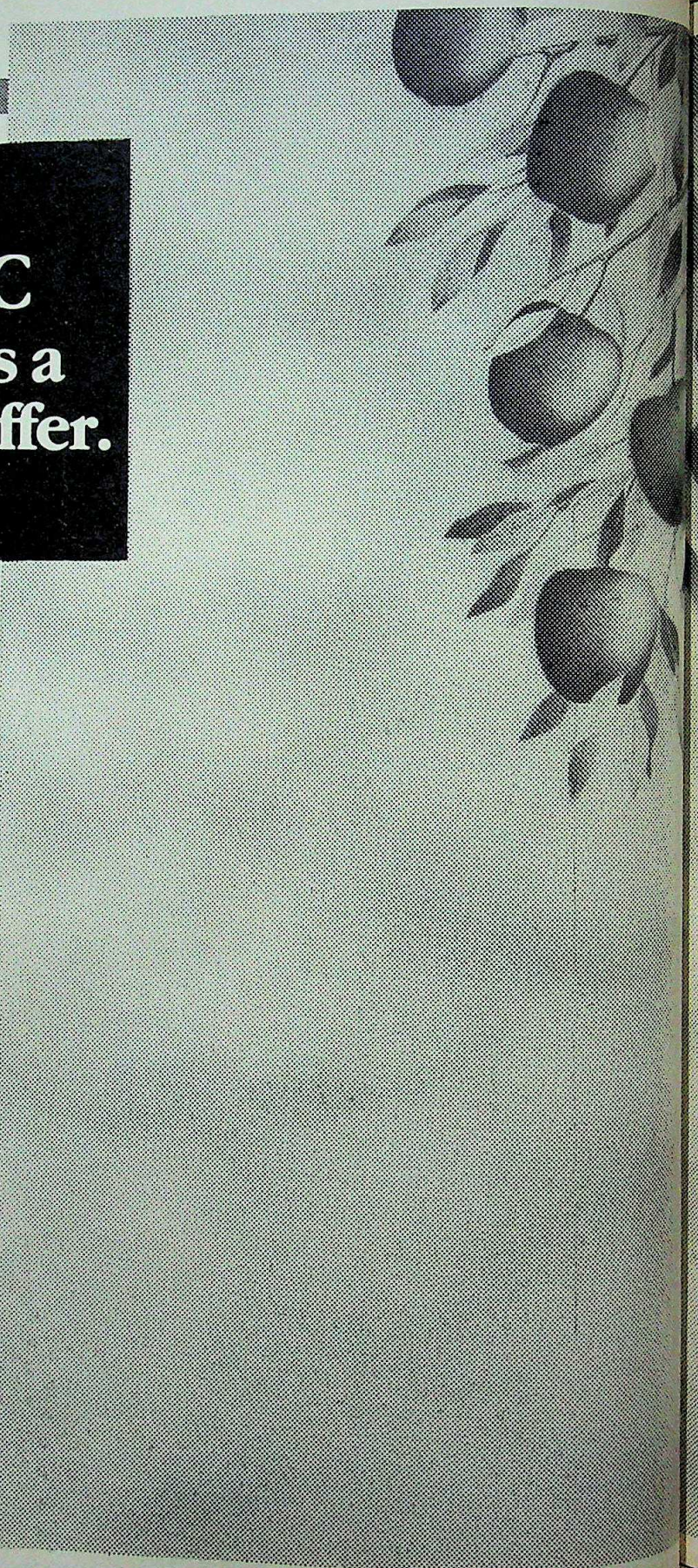
COUNTRY	CURRENCY	UNIT	TT Selling Rates Rs	TT Buying Rates Rs
Australia	Dollar	1	14.1498	13.9982
Austria	Shilling	100	168.6790	167.3080
Bahrain	Dinar	1	N/A	N/A
Bangladesh	Taka	100	52.0260	51.2411
Canada	Dollar	1	15.4620	15.3095
Denmark	Kroner	1	3.1266	3.0955
Egypt	Pound	1	6.8260	6.7110
France	Franc	1	3.6232	3.5336
Hong Kong	Dollar	1	2.3319	2.3095
Indonesia	Rupiah	100	0.9762	0.9618
Iran	Rial	100	N/A	N/A
Italy	Lira	100	1.5969	1.5735
Japan	Yen	100	14.5138	14.1443
Kenya	Shilling	1	0.7964	0.7854
Malaysia	Dollar	1	6.7223	6.6564
Mauritius	Rupee	1	1.2969	1.2756
Nepal	Rupee	1	N/A	N/A
Netherlands	Guilder	1	10.5866	10.4805
Pakistan	Rupee	1	0.8565	0.8444
Singapore	Dollar	1	10.6213	10.5148
Spain	Peseta	1	0.1903	0.1879
Sri Lanka	Rupee	1	0.4511	0.4457
Sweden	Kroner	1	3.2260	3.1930
Switzerland	Franc	1	14.1245	13.9803
Tanzania	Shilling	1	0.0956	0.0922
Thailand	Baht	100	72.6282	71.6558
UK	Pound	1	35.2920	35.0324
USA	Dollar	1	18.1571	17.9856
UAE	Dirham	1	N/A	N/A
USSR	Rouble	1	22.7870	22.7847
Germany	Deutschmark	1	12.1359	11.8343

These rates were supplied by The Bank of Tokyo Limited, New Delhi and quoted between the banks on 23.10.90.

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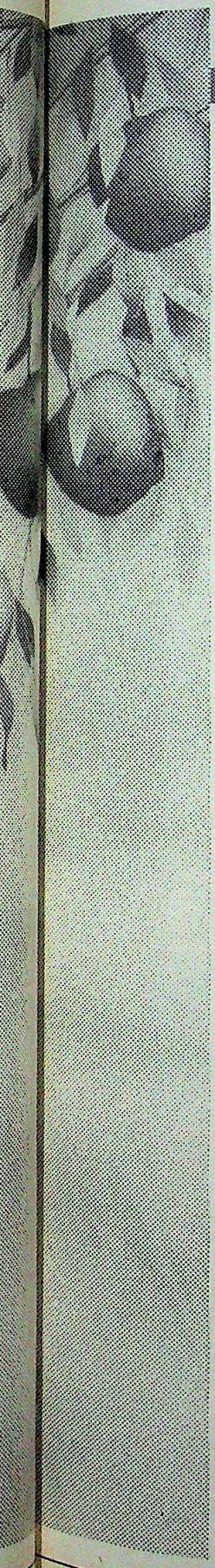
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HDFC extends a golden offer.



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HDFC has grown upwards, out-wards. Broadening its base to become the dominant force in a major priority investment sector.

Over the past decade, it has helped over 4 lakh families own their homes – and has, to date, approved loans exceeding Rs. 2,000 crores, through 25 offices spread around the country.

HDFC's financial performance has been consistently excellent with a growth rate of 35% per annum on an expanding base. Its inherent strengths have borne rich dividends as can be seen from its reserves, rising book value, growing earnings per share, increasing returns...

Now it invites the public to join its large family of investors, with a premium opportunity that will give handsome yields from the very start.

Issue of 10,00,000 Equity Shares of Rs. 100/- each for cash at a premium of Rs. 75/- for existing shareholders.

And 14,50,000 Equity Shares of Rs. 100/- each for cash at a premium of Rs. 85/- for the public.

HIGHLIGHTS:

- **Profit after tax: An increase of 167% in the year 1989-90 over the year 1986-87.**
- **Networth: Rs. 84.97 crores as of March 31, 1990.**
- **Book Value: Increased from Rs. 215 per share as on June 30, 1987 to Rs. 424 per share as on March 31, 1990.**
- **Earnings per share: Steadily increased from Rs. 46.24 for the year 1986-87 to Rs. 123.60 for the year 1989-90.**
- **Attractive offer price of Rs. 175 per share for shareholders and Rs. 185 per share for public, against the market price of Rs. 440 per share.***
- **Opportunity to invest in a high growth company operating in a high growth market.**
- **Interest concession on Housing Loans to shareholders.**
- **Ranked 4th in Asset Value (Source: Business India – September, 1990).**

*** As on October 4, 1990 at Bombay Stock Exchange.**

RIGHTS CLOSES: 9th Nov. PUBLIC OPENS: 12th Nov.

MANAGERS TO THE ISSUE

SBI Capital Markets Ltd.
202, Maker Tower E,
Cuffe Parade,
Bombay 400 005.

CANBANK
115, Atlanta
Nariman Point,
Bombay 400 021.

FINANCIAL ADVISOR

Ind Global Financial Trust Ltd.
1513, Maker Chambers V,
Nariman Point,
Bombay 400 021.

PRINCIPAL BROKERS TO THE ISSUE

J S B Securities Pvt. Ltd.
141, Maker Chambers III,
Nariman Point,
Bombay 400 021.

D S Purbhoodas & Co.
1107, Stock Exchange Towers,
Dalal Street,
Bombay 400 023.

H·D·F·C

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Tel Nos: 220265, 220282, 220908, 231146, 231054. Gram: HOUSCORP. Telex: HDFC 86762.

With you, right through.

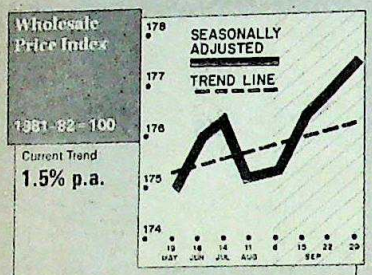
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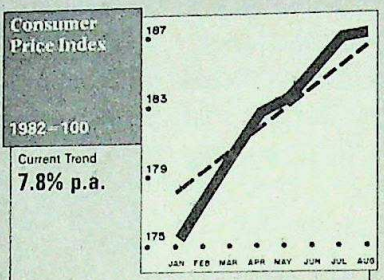
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Overall, the economy was sluggish. Despite a tight monetary situation, inflationary pressures could not be curtailed. Consumer prices rose and showed no signs of stabilising. Industrial output picked up. Concerted measures are needed to counter stagflation.

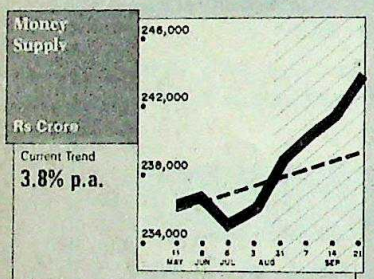
All data are seasonally adjusted. Current trends are computed on the basis of six months' (weekly data) or one-and-a-half years' (monthly data) figures.



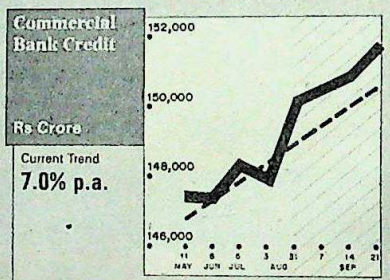
Wholesale prices registered a marginal increase—in the last six months they have been growing at 1.5 per cent.



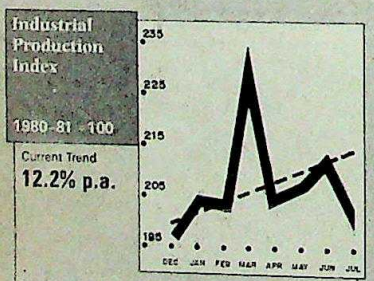
Consumer prices continue their inexorable rise—inflation is still very much a major problem.



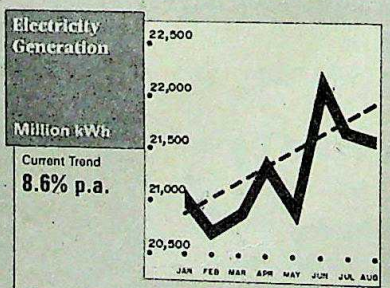
Money supply expanded slightly—though, the overall stability indicates a commitment to controlling inflation.



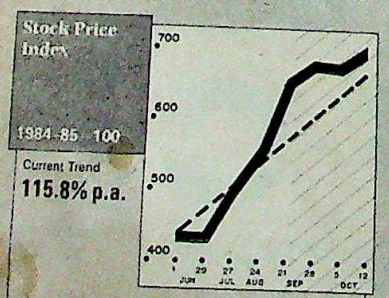
The current rate of credit expansion by commercial banks is too low to have any significant impact on industry.



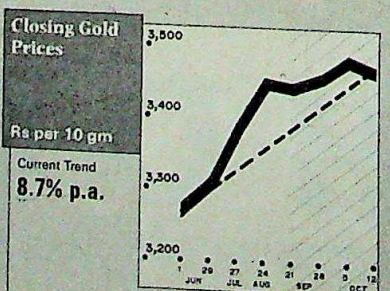
Industrial production fell—however, the current trend rate of growth stands at a respectable 12 per cent.



There has been a slow-down in electricity generation. The Government cannot afford to ration inputs to industry.



Stock prices shot up again after a slight dip. However, they show definite signs of stabilising.



Gold prices fell last fortnight an indication that—people are generally not feeling very festive this year.

WHOLESALE PRICES

Growth of items in the 2nd fortnight of September 1990

	% Growth
Onions	14.23
Fish	12.02
Rails	6.24
Semis Billets	6.20
Skelp	5.54
Pig Iron	5.34
Arhar	4.72
Plates & Sheets	4.60
Gur	4.29
Masoor	2.88
Coconut Oil	2.81
Tapioca	2.70
Copra	2.40
Tea	2.36
Steel Structurals	2.19
Internal Combustion Engines	2.00
Cars	1.75
Turmeric	1.74
Vanaspati	1.74
Barley	1.73
Linseed Oil	1.71
Cotton Cloth	1.69
Eggs	1.53
Bars & Rods	1.43
Groundnut Oil	1.39
Ghee	1.34
Cement	1.32
Transformers	1.17
Milk	1.15
Tubes	1.11
Atta	1.01
Cotton Raw	0.93
Gingelly Oil	0.92
Electricity	0.82
Linseed	0.73
Cotton Yarn	0.64
Wheat	0.56
Coffee	0.56
Steel Furniture	0.55
Dairy products	0.53
Rape & Mustard Seeds	0.51
Biscuits	0.43
Cables & Wires	0.32
Meat	0.28
Groundnut Seeds	0.25
Woollen Cloth & Woollen Khadi	0.13
Mustard Oil	0.10

Of the 134 series considered, 110 of them with a total weight of 66.191 had a non-negative rate of growth and 24 of them with a total weight of 18.661 had a negative rate of growth.

SELECTED INDICATORS

	1990	1989
Coal Thousand Tonnes, August	13950	13370
Saleable Steel Thousand Tonnes, August	759.0	747.4
Cement Thousand Tonnes, August	3650	3368
Fertilisers Thousand Tonnes, August	824.0	717.0
Call Money Rate Per cent, August	101.44	100.08

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The new Double Safety Brakes now comprise a tandem master cylinder with independent circuits for each axle. If one fails, the other backs up.

The new Touchlite Steering system incorporates a helical rack and pinion arrangement to greatly reduce your steering effort. (the car's turning diameter is just 10.8 metres). In addition, the steering has been ergonomically realigned to make driving easier and eliminate road shock. Back into that last parking space with the greatest ease.



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The new Easyshift Clutch makes it a joy to change gears. This keeps holiday mood going.

New Double Safety Brakes give you much surer stopping power. Breathe easier about little boys who chase their dog onto the road.

Contract H.M.A. 22321C

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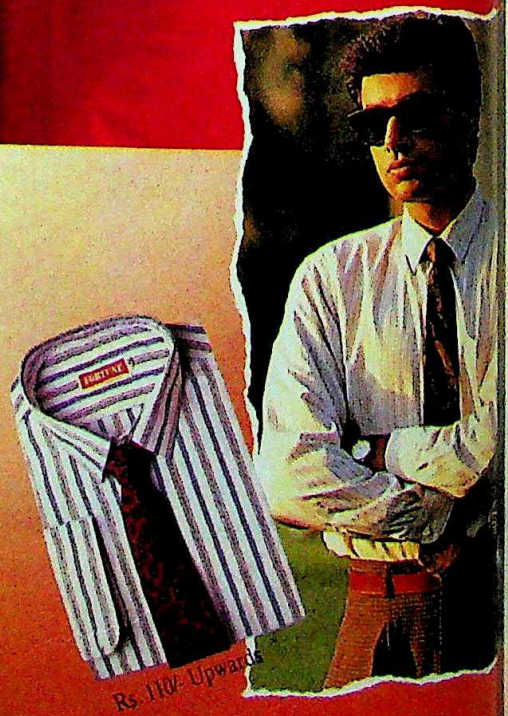
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GRAMOPHONE RECORDS

Preserving Old Echoes

Efforts are on to salvage 78 RPM records

Photographs by NAMAS BHOJANI





An old record shop in Bombay's Chor Bazaar (left) and Mulani's collection

THE sound of music is certainly changing as the market gets flooded with state-of-the-art equipment like compact disc players and digital tape recorders. But even as the acoustic revolution goes high-tech, a group of music enthusiasts is working to revive interest in an equally important phase of India's audio history—old gramophone recordings. Set up recently in Bombay, the aim of the Society of Indian Record Collectors (SIRC) is to salvage the wealth of recorded music and other material on 78 RPM records from total obscurity.

Says Suresh Chandvankar, a Tata Institute of Fundamental Research scientist, who is the secretary of the record collectors' society: "According to a rough estimate, five lakh titles under 75 different recording company labels have been issued in India since the early 1900s. If we can preserve even one lakh titles, it'll be quite an achievement."

Not that the entire treasure of records is restricted to film music. It is, in fact, a virtual audio history of India—Hindustani and Carnatic classical music, theatre songs, plays and satires, folk music, religious discourses, poetry, children's stories and songs, speeches by leaders like Mahatma Gandhi and Nehru, and even poems recited by Sarojini Naidu.

In its efforts to preserve gramophone records, the SIRC has begun by identifying 250 people around the country with major collections. SIRC President, Narayan Mulani's personal collection itself contains 3,000 records. In Bombay alone, there are at least 70 serious collectors, including Chandvankar whose 1,000 78 RPMs collection includes several unusual recordings like a Zoroastrian religious discourse under the Young Iran label. Among other well-known collectors is Prabhakar Datar, whose collection of 6,000 records includes an invaluable selection of old Marathi songs. Then there is Mukund Acharya—a tobacco and snuff shop owner—with a 3,000-strong collection of records with old Hindi film songs. Says Acharya: "My interest goes back when I was fascinated with operating the hand-cranked gramophone."

Though none of the collectors now play the 78 RPMs on the old gramophones—as its heavy pickup arm and thick needle shorten the life of a record—that doesn't detract from their value. Instead, they use modern four-speed changers in order to reproduce rare recordings.

India's best-known record collector is V.A.K. Ranga Rao, a music writer of Madras. His collection of 28,000 78 RPMs contains songs in 50 Indian and foreign languages, besides Hindustani and Carnatic classical music from 1903 to 1974. Says Rao: "I think they contain the history of a country and its culture, at 78 revolutions per minute."

Or to be precise, 78.26 revolutions. The overwhelming number of 78 RPMs were issued in 10 inch diameter size, with each side playing for 3.5 minutes. Then there were the 12 inch "long play" versions lasting up to eight

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minutes. While the smallest size was five inches, the largest records were 24 inches in diameter and were made only for the All India Radio signature tunes and revolved at 80 RPM.

The history of recorded music in India began not long after the invention of the gramophone by the American Emile Berliner in 1888. One of Berliner's associates set up the Gramophone Company in England in 1898. Three years later, the recording company opened a branch in Calcutta, initiating a golden era of 78 RPM gramophone music which lasted till the early '70s.

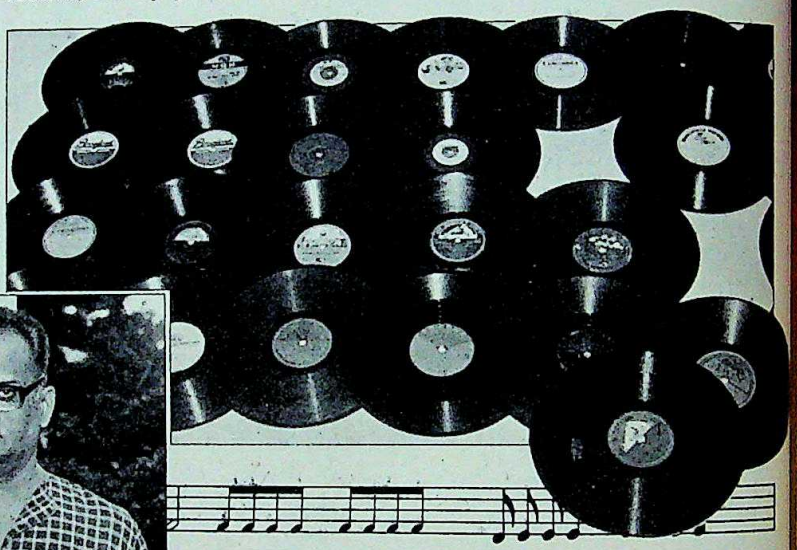
The earliest Indian recordings, like those of Gohar Jan and Janki Bai in 1903, were pressed into discs in Europe, until the Gramophone Company of India set up its Calcutta factory in 1908. Its original label, depicting an angel writing on a disc, was later replaced by the dog listening to a gramophone—a logo which made the His Master's Voice (HMV) label synonymous with the Gramophone Company.

So complete was the Gramophone Company's monopoly over the 78 RPM record business that its Dum Dum factory remained the only one in India till the German Polydor Company set up its own unit in Bombay in 1969. Nevertheless, several entrepreneurs attempted to break the HMV stranglehold, producing records which today are a collector's delight.

Some independent companies did create quite a stir—Bombay's Broadcast Records, for instance, which lured away some of the major classical vocalists like Sidheshwari Devi, Kesarbai Kerkar and Mallikarjun Mansur from HMV, or T.S. Ramchander's Ramagraph Records which issued nearly 5,000 titles till 1940. All these recording companies were forced to get their records pressed in Germany or Japan, except for a few like Hindustan Records and Megaphone which received HMV backing since they exclusively recorded two major singers—K.L. Saigal and Begum Akhtar.

But the biggest challenge to HMV came from the Young India label promoted by film maker V. Shantaram in 1936. Young India's logo expressed the dominant nationalist sentiments prevailing at the time—a tricolour over the map of India. Some of the best Prabhat Film Company music was issued under this label.

COLLECTORS today treasure such old records which form part of the history of record companies—the earliest one-sided discs, cardboard records, plastic postcard records, canary yellow Bulbul label discs, records which play from inside to out, souvenir label records given free with cinema balcony tickets, and the intriguing 'puzzle records', with the listener getting any of three songs by slightly varying the starting point on the disc.





Photographs by T. RAMAMOORTHY

V.A.K. Rao and his collection: record haul

Collectors have picked many of these historic records from places like Bombay's Chor Bazaar, which has junk shops specialising in old gramophones and 78 RPM records. According to Anwar Husain, a Chor Bazaar dealer, only about 30 per cent of the records collected from homes by *kabariwalas* are good for listening, while the rest are resold for children and street artists to paint on. Most 78 RPMs can be bought for between Rs 3 and Rs 10 each. But rare records in mint condition can fetch up to several hundred rupees. Says Husain: "But the supply of records is much less now than a decade ago."

Which is why SIRC wants to make sure that information on old records is collated before the supply dies out completely. It also plans to function as an "information exchange" on old records, at the same time ensuring that record collections are not thrown away by disinterested family members after the death of a collector.

The move to set up SIRC was, in fact, initiated by an Australian discographer, Michael Kinnear, who has just come out with the first of a multi-volume catalogue of Indian records since 1903. Kinnear's interest in Indian 78 RPMs began when he was a recording engineer with HMV in Bombay in the '60s. Eventually, the society would like to help set up a National Sound Archives, on the lines of the Pune film archives.

The National Centre for the Performing Arts (NCPA) in Bombay has already taken a step towards creating a music archives. "We have nearly 10,000 old discs, and an ongoing programme of recording contemporary classical artistes on tape," says NCPA Programme Officer Vasant Dandavate, younger brother of Finance Minister Madhu Dandavate, whose 78 RPM collection contains 700 vintage classical vocal records.

Music, of course, has the power to delight generations of listeners. Even old film songs continue to enrapture audiences, and are constantly revived. By ensuring that the old 78 RPMs do not get destroyed, record collectors are playing an important role in preserving an invaluable part of India's cultural heritage.

—M. RAHMAN

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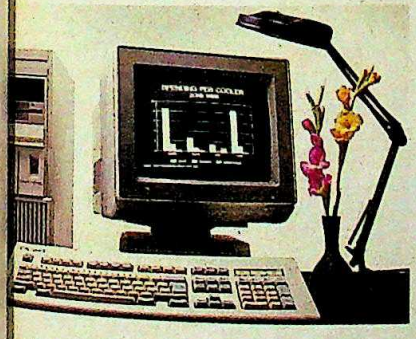
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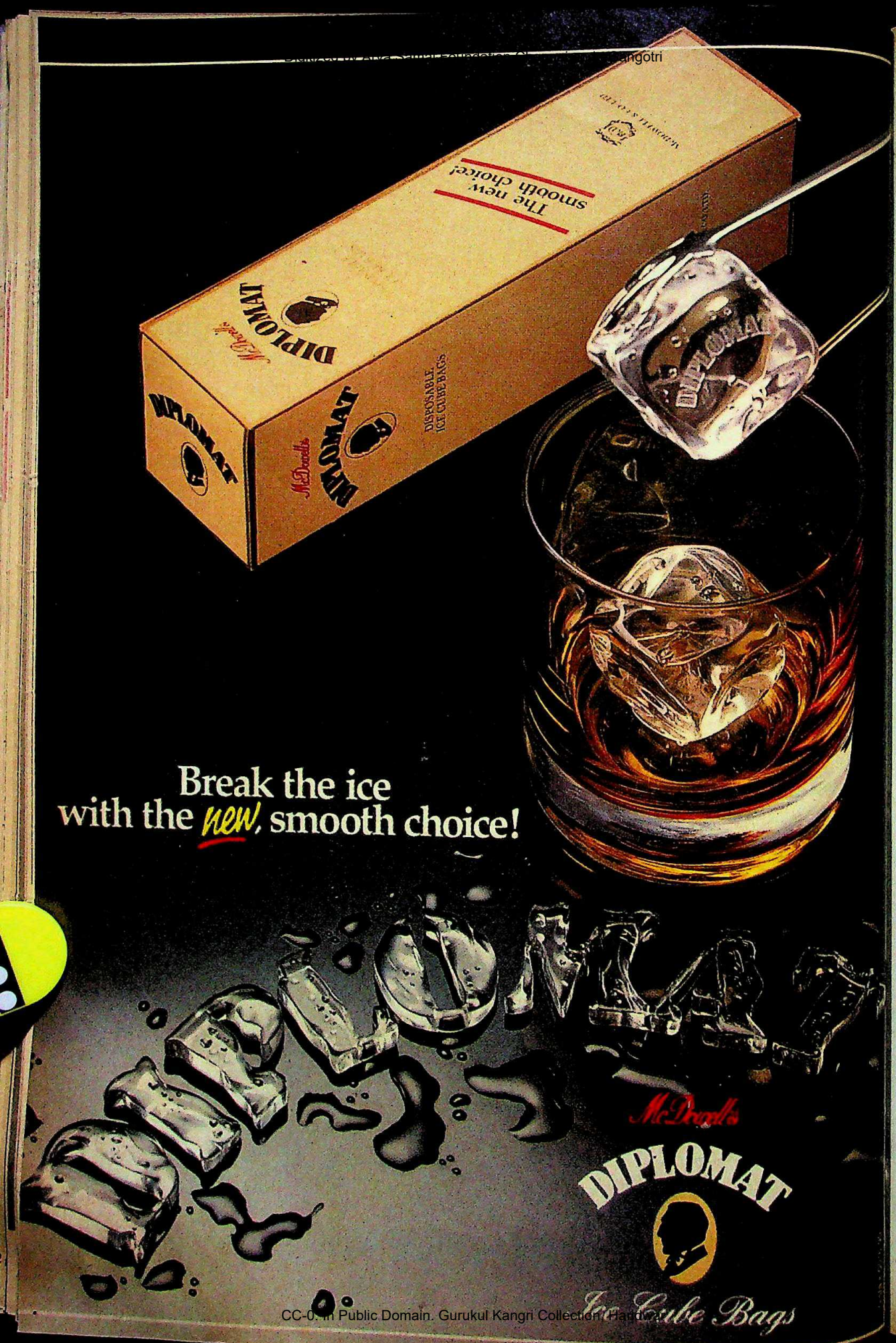
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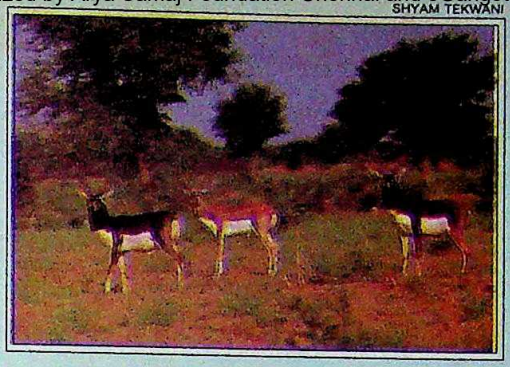
Saving the Buck

FOR years the majestic black buck, inhabiting the 15,000 acre game reserve of Ramunda and Vetanoi-Balipada in south Orissa, has been hunted to near extinction by poachers. The buck's spiral horn, valued at Rs 6,000, and the hide, at over Rs 3,000, have made them a tempting target. The result: their number dwindled from 1,200 in 1981 to 250 now.

But the species have new saviours: the tribals who inhabit 30 villages in the Aska-Bhajnagar belt. Fed up with the Government passing the buck, the angry villagers decided to take action.

In April, natives of Mangalpur chased away poachers. Dhanicha and Chandanpalli villagers did the same.

SHYAM TEKWANI



Black buck: dwindling species

Recently, an armed intruder was caught red-handed at Shahpur. Says Ramkrushna Bhatta, an old villager from Bajrokot: "Poachers will no longer be entertained here."

It's not easy for the villagers to trap poachers in the large reserve. But their unified stand has driven home the point that Ramunda and Vetanoi-Balipada are no longer hunting grounds.

The villagers may have been inspired by superstition. Years ago when the bucks migrated, the region was hit by a severe drought. When they returned, there were heavy rains.

Whatever the reason, a decrease in poaching is evident. But given government indifference, foresters, collusion with poachers and threats to silence the villagers, the bucks' saviours are fighting a losing battle.

The Rat Trap

PLAGUED by the rodent menace, farmers of the Vadanemmeli village in Tamil Nadu have been using chemicals, pesticides and baits in vain to keep the rodent level under check. Faced with this dilemma, the farmers sought the services of local Pied Pipers: the Irula tribals.

The Irulas, like the Santhals and Nats in Bihar, don't use pesticides but their methods are based on a knowledge of rodent behaviour. The Irulas recognise as many as eight species of rats and mice and trap them in their burrows by blocking their exit holes and can account for every rat killed.

The two-year programme, launched in February 1988, was carried out by a group appropriately called the Rodent and Termite Squad (RATS) of the Irula Snake Catcher's Co-operative. Till March this year RATS caught as many as 1,40,000 rats and covered an area of 40,000 acres. RATS also recovered 3,300 kg of grain and dug up 73,000 rat burrows. An average of Rs 7 was spent per acre and the cost per rat caught worked out to Rs 2. The experiment conclusively proved that the Irula approach is the surest and cost effective way to control rats.



WHITAKER

Irula tribal with catch: Pied Piper

Flush from their success, the Irulas are now exploring ways of using rat flesh as chicken and fish feed. And rat skin can be used to make fancy leather.

The Irulas now have an even greater challenge ahead: breaking into the capital-based pesticide programmes. And this may prove to be a more daunting challenge than the rodents for this tribal self-help scheme.

Decaying Oasis

IN the parched hills of the Aravali range in Udaipur district is located Bichhri village, which was considered to be something of an oasis because of its excellent groundwater. Mango and guava orchards irrigated by this water bloomed.

But today, these very wells are suffering from one of the worst cases of groundwater pollution known. The pollution was first noticed by the villagers in the monsoon months of 1988. Subsequent groups of scientists from Aligarh and Rourkee universities studied the wells. Their findings: at least 60 wells were severely polluted due to the carcinogenic, aromatic organic compounds, which could have only come from the acid manufactured by the Silver Chemicals factory in the vicinity, which closed down early last year. Another concern was the lethal sludge lying in the compound. The problems got caught in red tape. Finally Minster of State for Environment, Maneka Gandhi, instructed the state Government, under the Environment Protection Act, to remove the sludge, failing which the Central Pollution Control Board should have to carry out the task. In April the Supreme Court directed that the sludge be removed. But to no avail.



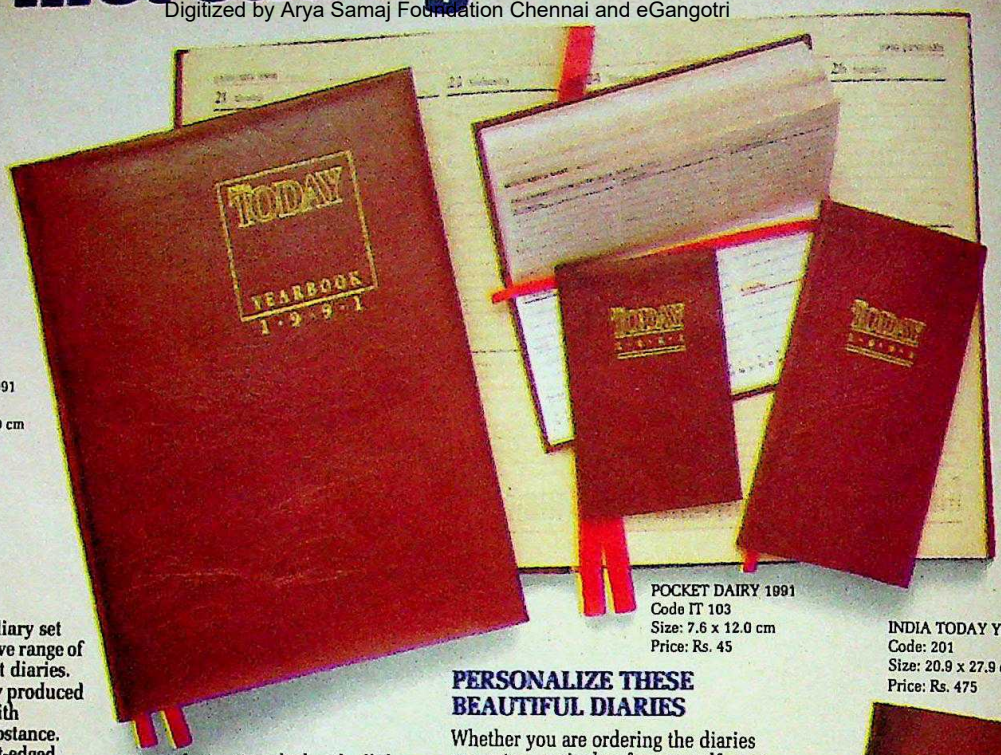
Bichhri village water supply: polluted

—W.P.S. SIDHU

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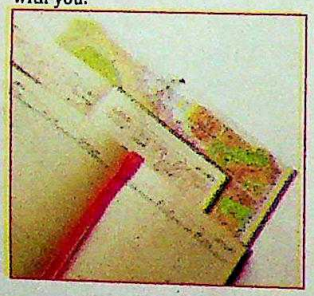
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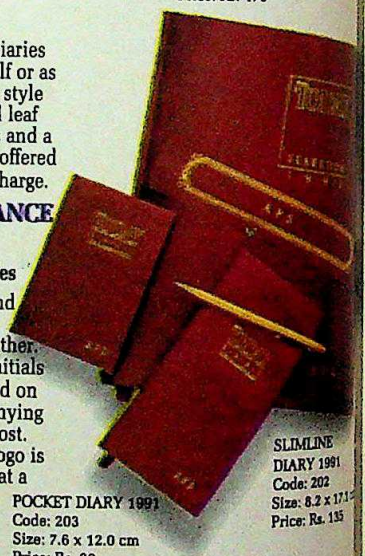
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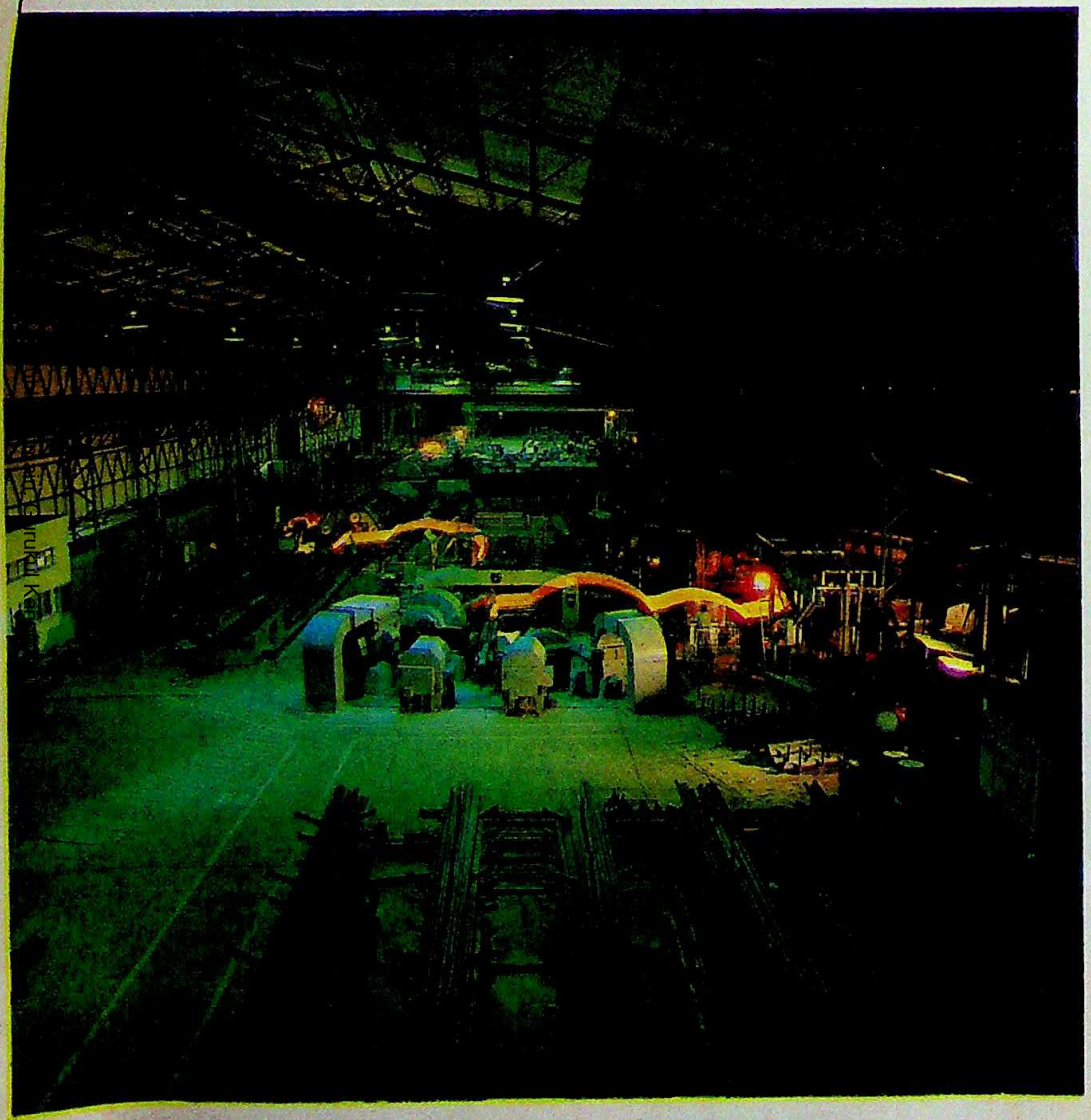
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BIHAR

Harvest of Hatred

The violent anti-Mandal protests have travelled from cities to villages in the state and caste-based skirmishes threaten to escalate into a no-holds-barred war.

By FARZAND AHMED

KAPILDEO Prasad Singh, 80, a disabled but prosperous Bhumihar farmer of village More in Patna district, ruminates endlessly on his cot. He is a worried man; at his age, he doesn't need societal upheavals. He needs peace. But, instead of thinking about the crops, he is trying to figure out what the vexatious Mandal Commission report is all about. "A kind of political poison has suddenly paralysed village society," he says slowly. "People have started hating each other. And nobody knows why."

Five kilometres west of More is Mekra, a village of fairly well-off Yadavs, the nemesis of the forward castes. Bindeshwari Rai, 50, is as troubled as Kapildeo Prasad Singh: "All we understand of the Mandal Commission report is that there will be reservation of jobs for the backward castes. I think that only those who will qualify the examinations will get jobs. So why is there so much hatred?"

Naresh Prasad Singh, 55, the Congress(I) president of the Hasua block in Nawadah district and a Bhumihar to boot, is panic-stricken. "I have shifted my family to a safer place because a caste war has broken out in this area." He claims that 50 other families have also locked up their houses and gone off elsewhere due to the caste hysteria that politicians have deliberately created.

More, Mekra and Hasua, like numerous hamlets and towns in the districts of Patna, Begusarai, Purnia, Madhepura, Saharsa, Nawadah, Jehanabad, Vaishali, Saran and Muzaffarpur, are being rocked by similar caste skirmishes that if not controlled could take on the dimensions of a holocaust.

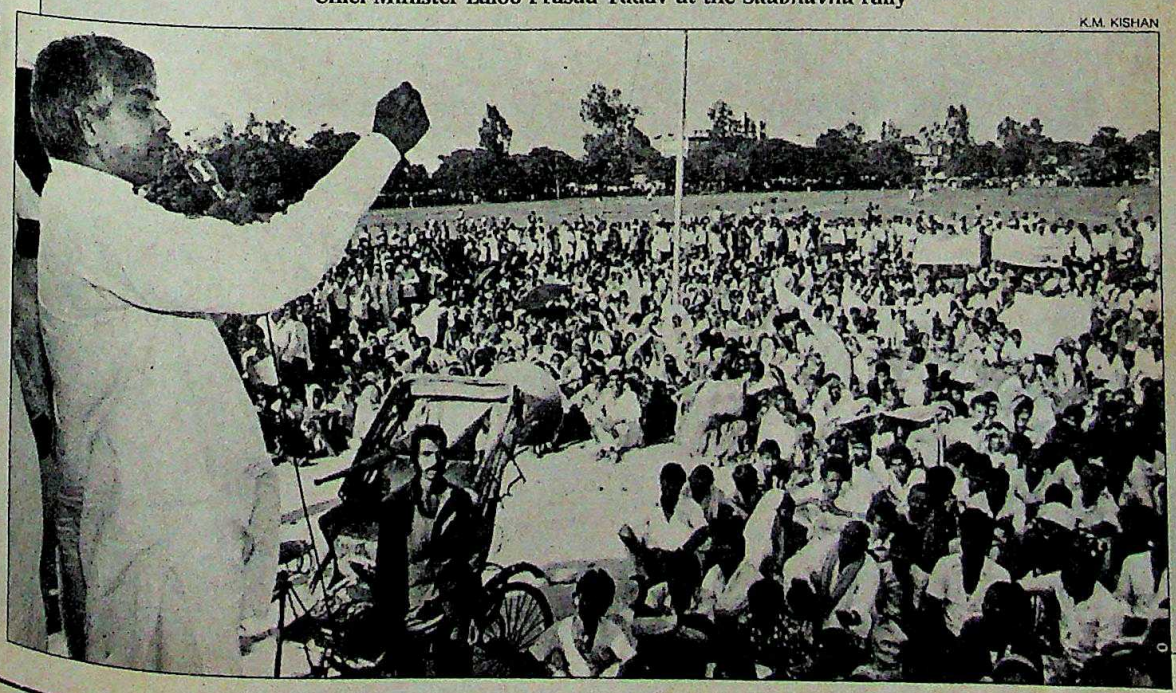
But if some of the villagers are panicked, others are more philosophical. Take, for instance, Umesh Prasad Singh, once a Bhumihar landlord in More. Says he about the insensate violence: "People are yet to realise that the Mandal report, instead of benefitting either the backwards or the forwards, is aimed at splitting and destroying traditional village society."

Like an invincible cancer, the violent protests have travelled from the cities and towns of north India into the rural heartland, pitting neighbour against neighbour, friend against friend. And few of the protestors know precisely what they are fighting for or against. Says a senior police officer in Patna: "Illiterate and semi-literate people have turned against each other

Laloo Prasad Yadav has frequently egged on the Yadavs to carry on a war of attrition against the Bhumihars in a fairly blatant manner.

Chief Minister Laloo Prasad Yadav at the *Sadbhavna* rally

K.M. KISHAN



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Modi Rubber Limited

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STATEMENT MADE BY SHRI MANTOSH SONDHI, CHAIRMAN AT THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING HELD ON MONDAY, THE 15TH OCTOBER, 1990



Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the Board of Directors and on my own behalf, I extend to you all a very warm and cordial welcome to the 19th Annual General Meeting of your Company. It is unfortunate that this meeting originally scheduled to be held on the 27th September, 1990 had to be adjourned at the last moment due to the imposition of curfew in Modinagar. We sincerely regret any inconvenience caused to you on this account. The notice convening the earlier meeting, the Directors' Report and the audited Accounts for the period ended March 31, 1990 have been with you for some time now and, with your permission, I shall take them as read.

This is the first Annual General Meeting at which I am meeting all of you; unfortunately last year I could not be present for the Annual General Meeting due to unavoidable reasons. I regard it as an honour to be associated with a Company like Modi Rubber Limited, which has not only established for itself a pre-eminent position in the tyre industry in the country, but has also carved a niche for itself in the export market.

The Annual General Meeting is always an appropriate occasion to take a brief look at the state of our economy with particular reference to the tyre industry. Such a survey assumes additional significance considering that we are now at the threshold of Eighth Five Year Plan.

ECONOMIC SCENE

Over the years, our agriculture has developed a high degree of resilience through the application of improved technologies in farm production. For a country that produced about 120 million tonnes of foodgrains only a few years ago, it is indeed a creditable achievement to expect to attain a production level of 178.3 million tonnes during 1990-91. Concurrently the foodgrain stocks have gone up from 11 to 22 million tonnes. Obviously three successive good monsoons have helped in this. This, however, should not lull us into a sense of complacency and we must continue to press with unsparing efforts towards a target of 250 million tonnes of food production by the turn of the century to feed our growing population. As it was once said, we have to keep running faster even to be able to stay where we are. Population control, therefore, is an area which needs far greater attention than it has been possible to give so far, if substantial progress in per capita terms is to be achieved. Even in the Eighth Five Year Plan it looks that enough resources will not be provided for this purpose. This is, indeed, a great pity.

In a developing economy, the sustenance of growth can be derived only from better management and greater efficiency at the micro and macro levels. At the micro level, industry, be it in the public or the private sector because both these together really constitute the national sector, cannot escape the responsibility for maintaining a continuously rising level of productivity to fuel further growth. At the macro level, the Government must provide the necessary policy, procedural and administrative support required for the timely completion of new projects and for industrial production to continuously expand and diversify. It is a matter of some gratification that the private sector has now been given a greater role to play in the steel, power and the road building industries. Similarly, the new Industrial Policy announced by the Government on the 31st May 1990 is a step in the right direction. The unfortunate part, however, is that the details of this policy framework are still being worked out, and this policy has not really got off the ground so far. This seems to be yet another example of the malady from which we tend to suffer so often—"Paralysis of Analysis".

It is no mean accomplishment that since independence, India has not only achieved a diversified industrial production structure but has also acquired the potential for the development of high-tech industries. These should now become focal points for the future growth of our industrial economy, in close co-operation and in harmony with the outside world, where massive socio-economic transformations have taken place over the last one year. One must also recognise that the world trade in the transfer of technology amongst the developed nations is growing rapidly every year. We should, therefore, have no inhibition about the import of technology so long as it is done judiciously and selectively, and is associated with domestic R&D effort to facilitate absorption, adaptation and further development of the imported technology. In this context, India being one of the most developed amongst the developing countries, multi-nationals should not be regarded as tools for exploitation but as instruments for technological development and growth.

In this background of all round growth, one should not overlook the dangers which stare us in the face. The budgetary deficit, the inflati pressures, the adverse balance of pay position and the rapidly deteriorating la order situation are all matters of serious c which are bound to get further aggravated w Gulf crisis which is getting more and threatening every day. There is no other except to overcome this rather grim situation determination and fortitude.

SAVINGS IN TRANSPORT FUEL

In the present context, a positive strategy be adopted to reduce the consumption of dies petrol. From this point of view, use of Compr Natural Gas (CNG) as Transport Fuel offe attractive possibility. During the last 5 although there has been no significant increa oil production, considerable reserves of natur (650 billion cubic metre in 1989) have been k and its production has also increased (17 b cubic metres in 1989). However, a signif quantity of natural gas (5.5 billion cubic me 1989) is being flared every year due to inade gas utilisation schemes. Valuable natural gas c used as a substitute for High Speed Diesel (H and petrol. This will also help to reduce e emissions from vehicles in overcrowded c From a recent ONGC publication I find that d the Eighth Plan an investment of the ord Rs. 73 crores is planned for the use of the with 30 refuelling stations, 300 Kms of pi and 35,000 conversion kits to be made avail selected metropolitan areas. The implemen of this scheme must obviously be accelerated very happy to find that the Planning Comm is giving very serious consideration to the CNG for road transport.

Over a little longer span, additional resour road maintenance must be provided. One opt get these additional funds for road maintena to "toll" some existing highways. It would als if the private sector is encouraged to partici this work utilising their own funds raised by through public financing. It is well documen many reports that as much as Rs 500 crores is wasted every year due to bad road condi

Administrative measures such as the rema the remnants of that most obnoxious for taxation—the octroi—must also be immed taken to ensure further saving in HSD. T knowledge, this proposal was given very s consideration in mid-seventies after the fir crisis, and it is unfortunate that we are still s with this problem in some States. If a decisi been taken at that time to remove octroi we have actually saved hundreds of crores of foreign exchange over the last 15 years or so.

REVIEW OF OPERATIONS

During the year under review, your Co has achieved a turnover of around Rs. 482 C

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rking an increase of 6.82% on an annualised
s over the previous year. Exports have also
re than doubled. Against the back-drop of
erall performance of tyre industry in the country
ich has become highly competitive, the
rformance of your Company may be considered
satisfactory. This has been achieved through
rther rationalisation of product-mix, optimisa-
n of capacity utilisation linked with quality
surance, stringent cost saving measures includ-
energy conservation and better overall
ancial management. It is expected that this year
ith discernible buoyancy in the automotive sector,
rnover of your Company will cross Rs. 500
res mark.

PORTS

Excellent performance by your Company in the
port market has enabled it to maintain its pre-
inent position as an exporter of automobile
es and tubes. We would make every possible
ort to continue to maintain this coveted
sition. Exports of Rs. 39.95 Crores (including
5.78 Crores of non-company products) were
her by 126% on an annualised basis over the
evious year. Your Company expects to improve
export performance during the current year by
ering to the requirements of sophisticated
erseas markets with products of international
ality at economic prices.

ODERNISATION AND BALANCING OF XISTING FACILITIES

In any manufacturing facility, modernisation
balancing of existing facilities is a must, and
quires close attention on a continuous basis in
der to maintain the competitive edge, especially
the light of rapid technological changes and
anges in the nature and pattern of customer
mand. Proposals for this purpose have already
en finalised in consultation with the collabora-
rs M/s Continental Aktiengesellschaft, West
rmany so that these can be implemented
thout any further delay. To part finance this
odernisation programme, your Company has
cently submitted a proposal for financial
sistance to the Financial Institutions.

ANUFACTURE OF RADIAL TYRES

As a part of the above scenario, a proposal for
dertaking the manufacture of radial tyres has
so been finalised in consultation with our
llaborators although some matters of detail have
ill to be finalised. As you are probably aware, your
mpany already has an industrial licence for the
anufacture of 400,000 such tyres per annum.

OMPUTERISATION

Phase-I of the computerisation programme
hich will cover the two plants at Modinagar and
odipuram, with a link-up with the Headquarters
Delhi, at an estimated cost of Rs. 150 lakhs is
der implementation.

Phase-II of this programme which will link up
he Headquarters with the Marketing Depots will
taken in hand on completion of Phase-I.

EW PROJECTS

It is important that while consolidating our
esent activities, we should keep scanning the
conomic firmament for future opportunities.
With this objective, a new Company, Gujarat Guardian Limited has been incorporated jointly with Gujarat Alkalies & Chemicals Limited on the 21st February 1990 for the manufacture of Float Glass in technical and financial collaboration with Guardian Industries Corporation, USA. This project is already under appraisal by the Financial Institutions. Similarly another project for the manufacture of Solvent Spun Highwet Modulus Cellulosic Fibre in technical and financial collaboration with Courtaulds Fibres Ltd., is under appraisal by the Financial Institutions.

The project for the manufacture of large capacity Diesel Generating Sets in technical collaboration with Mirrlees Blackstone, UK is already under implementation by Modi Mirrlees Blackstone Limited.

RESEARCH & DEVELOPMENT

R&D is the cornerstone of our future development strategy. R&D is continuously being strengthened in terms of new equipment and human resources—both key inputs. In fact, the R&D Centre of your Company has grown in a manner that in a report published by the Ministry of Science & Technology, it has been acknowledged as being the largest centre of its kind in the tyre industry. During the current year Rs. 5 Crores have been earmarked for further upgradation of the R&D Wing.

During the year under review, your Company has successfully developed and launched a new truck tyre "MARATHON" which has higher mileage potential and has been well accepted by the consumers. New sizes and patterns have also been added to light truck/passenger range of tyres and to meet the changing market trends.

THE TYRE INDUSTRY

The future of the tyre industry will call for a pragmatic management of several factors. The total production capacity is already in excess of the demand. This gap is bound to widen when the expansion programmes of many companies are completed.

For the year 1990-91, based on an estimated production level of 5.80 million truck and bus tyres, against a demand of 4.38 million, the excess production will be 1.42 million. By the year 1995, the total capacity in the industry will be about 9.12 million and the demand with an annual increase of 5% would still be only 5.54 million. The growth of the tyre retreading industry, the volumes of tyres retreaded, and the introduction of the "cold cure" process for tyre retreading have also contributed to a fall in the demand for new tyres.

The strategy to cope with this glut situation lies in increasing exports and reducing the input costs. Emphasis must be placed on R&D, technological upgradation, cost reduction, better management of resources, product improvement, quality orientation, innovative marketing and customer satisfaction. Your Company is well equipped to meet this challenge.

One must also recognise that in the ultimate analysis, in line with what is happening worldwide in the tyre industry with mergers and acquisitions, in India also it is going to be the question of survival of the fittest.

CONVERTIBLE DEBENTURES

Your Company proposes to issue fully convertible debentures amounting to Rs. 75 Crores for the modernisation programme and for undertaking new projects. Requisite resolutions have been included in the agenda of this meeting for your approval.

SOCIAL OBLIGATIONS

All around development of the area around our centre of operations has always been the principal aim of your Company. We are gradually enlarging the scope and scale of our social welfare activities in and around the area of our operations. We shall continue to pursue these objectives with continued zeal and enthusiasm.

LABOUR RELATIONS

Throughout the year, the Company continued to have harmonious and cordial labour relations. The Workmen, Staff and Management are jointly dedicated to the common goal of "Discipline, Quality and Production", set by your Company. A sense of belonging and team-spirit prevailed through the organisation. The unstinted cooperation and untiring efforts put in by the workers, staff and officers are deeply appreciated.

THE FUTURE

In conclusion, I am happy to state that in spite of some difficulties today your Company is strong, healthy and growing and is entitled to look forward to an even brighter future.



Note : This does not purport to be a record of the proceedings of the Annual General Meeting.

BMA/MRL

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without any inkling of the suggestions in the Mandal report."

And the violence shows no signs of abating. As matters stand today, neither the forwards nor the backwards are in any mood to curb mutual animosity. If there is any one person who can be partly blamed for the tension that has gripped the state, it is Chief Minister Laloo Prasad Yadav. He has frequently shot his mouth off, egging on the Yadavs to carry out a war of attrition against the Bhumihars ostensibly without any moral qualms. While he openly threatens anti-reservation Bhumihars, they threaten to blow their war conches and take to the streets.

OBSERVERS say that the seeds of a caste war were sown during an anti-reservation rally in Patna on September 4 with the chief minister representing the target of attack. Rather than relent, the chief minister launched a verbal barrage of his own. He warned that if the anti-reservationists continued with their crusade, harsh retaliation would quickly follow. And that is exactly what happened.

Then followed the Bharat Bandh on September 10, organised by belligerent anti-reservationists. In Hasua, Congress(I) MLA Aditya Narain Singh, a fire-breathing Bhumihar, let loose a torrent of vitriol against the chief minister. The mob went wild, attacking, among other premises, a bank. Some rallyists opened fire, killing four among the agitation.

Hasua market, in fact, turned into a battleground. It has a preponderance of shopkeepers belonging to the backward castes and an "economic blockade" was set up for the high castes. Says K.D. Singh, a Congress(I) leader: "This was in retaliation to a number of shops being opened in the villages of Baliari, Baidyanathpur and Bajramore exclusively for the forward castes." Then the keg blew. In the gory aftermath of the Bharat Bandh, people reported the sighting of as many as 12 bodies in *nallahs*.

Matters came to a head during the pro-reservationist *sadbhavna* rally in Patna on October 8. Chief Minister Yadav had been shoring up his position as the sole champion of the backward castes for days before the rally. His caste brethren reportedly went around organising support by the simple method of coercion. The forward castes decided to barricade themselves and block the rallyists, spontaneously imposing a "janata curfew".

According to observers, the central character in this see-saw battle for political visibility was one Rajesh Ranjan alias the dreaded Pappu Yadav, an independent MLA from the Singeshw constituency in the Madhepura distr in north Bihar. Although loaded do with criminal cases, Pappu Yadav h the ear of the chief minister and has t managed to avoid legal incarcerati He tried to barge into the October 8 ra with goon gangs located truc lently at Khagaria, Begusarai a Mokamma in Patna district.

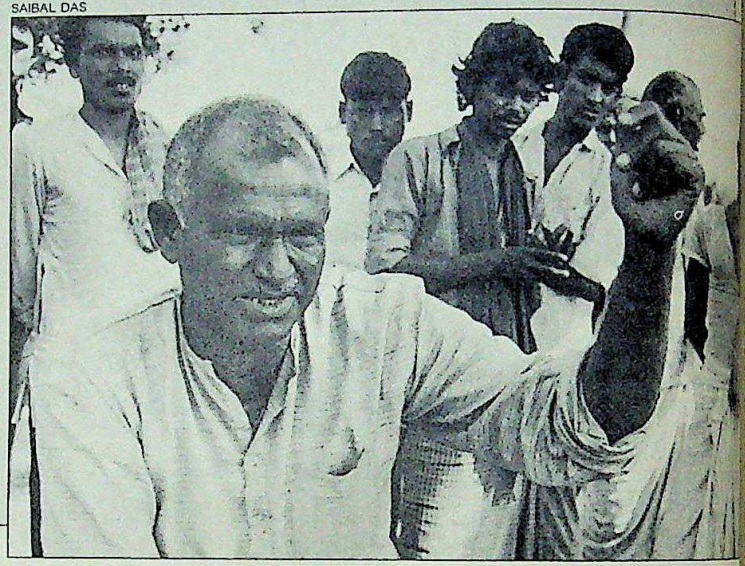
According to Bindeshw Rai, a Yadav of Mekra villa clashes broke out following r mours that Pappu Yadav and h supporters were stopped at pla like Inyar, Harhar Maha Chowk, Bihat, Begusarai a Seonar, a Bhumihar village cl to Mokamma town. Says Ram shray Singh, 60, chairperson the local Krishi Sakh Samiti: "T youth of Seonar had imposed curfew the night before the ra Pappu Yadav came in full for with approximately 60 bus loaded with armed men, stopp at the petrol bunk, where th shouted abuses at the Bhumiha and even started firing ind criminately."

According to Rampadar Singh of the same village, Pap Yadav's men decided to loot village but the villagers set fire his car carrying currency no

"All we know is there will be reservation for the backwards. But only those who pass exams will get jobs. So why is there so much hatred?"

Bindeshwari Rai, a Yadav landlord

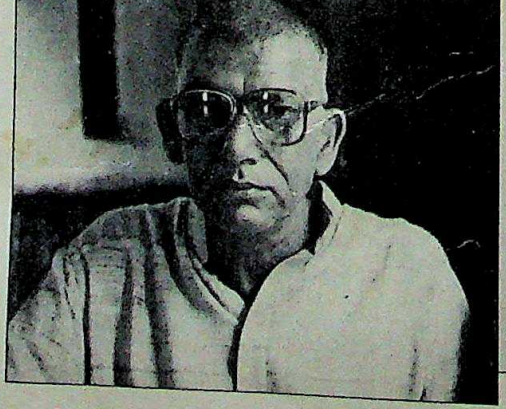
SAIBAL DAS



"People don't see the Mandal report, instead of benefitting anyone, is aimed at splitting traditional village society."

Umesh Prasad , a Bhumihar landlord

SAIBAL DAS



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and ammunition. Said he: "Yadav took shelter in the police station. Had any of the villagers been killed, he would not have survived." Instead of being taken into custody, Yadav was escorted to Patna by the Border Security Force (BSF) and let loose.

The state Government, in danger of losing control over the state, decided to impose a "punitive tax" in the 150-km stretch between Patna and Barahiya. It didn't defuse matters. In fact, sensitive villages had to be cordoned off by the BSF and peace committees hastily formed in many areas, to little avail. Incidents of caste violence continued to pour in from Mokamma and the Vaishali district, north of the Ganga, particularly from the volatile stretch between Hajipur and Lalganj. Currents ran so strong that some villages in Vaishali district decided to seal off their lands and acquire arms.

Though it is the Mandal report that has sparked off this outbreak of caste war, the roots of the Yadav-Bhumihar animosity run deep. The primary reason is that the Yadavs, who are numerically stronger among the intermediary castes, and the Bhumihars, an offshoot of the Brahmins, both have a passion for buying up land.

ACCORDING to social scientist Saibal Gupta the Yadavs were subjected to maximum repression as they were tenants of zamindars who were mostly Rajputs or Bhumihars. When the Bihar Tenancy Act was enforced in 1885, the zamindars started evicting them and in the 1920s bitter battles between the Yadavs and landlords broke out over the price of milk. The landlords then organised the upper castes and boycotted the Goalas (Yadavs).

It was as a reaction to this that the Yadavs too started garnering strength and they even adopted a bizarre strategy to acquire social status the easy way: they started wearing the sacred thread. In 1923 the All India Yadav Mahasabha was formed giving them the much-needed organisational umbrella. The kisan movements also started by then and the Yadavs were natural components of this struggle and later they provided much support to the socialist movement too.

U.N. Sinha, a retired IAS officer and a staunch supporter of the scheme for reservation for backward castes, recalls that when the Yadavs started wearing the sacred thread they were often beaten up and many were killed. But the real fight for social recognition began in the '50s in the Hindi belt due mainly to the socialist movement. And when the zamindari system was abolished the Yadavs emerged as a major social force.

Syed Najmuddin, president of the Bihar Intellectual Forum, feels that many of the backward castes were beneficiaries of Partition as many feudal Muslim families migrated to Pakistan leaving behind their landed property which naturally was taken up by the cultivators.

With increased social strength political ambitions sprouted and it bore fruition when B.P.Mandal became the first Yadav chief minister in the country. And on him fell the tough task of heading the commission for studying the status of backwards caste and suggesting remedies. He seemed to have relished the task immensely.

Outpowered in the rural areas the Bhumihars moved towards the cities and concentrated on getting into government jobs and in acquiring degrees. The Mandal report they felt would close the door on them in these crucial sectors as well and took up a last-ditch stand.

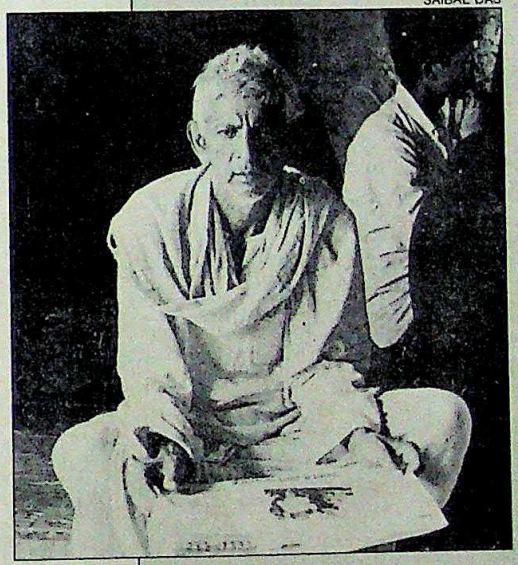
The caste war in Bihar is thus the desperate elbowing for social stature. Both the castes feel that if they do not act now it might be too late to pull themselves out from the social morass they fear they will get trapped in. And they don't mind if they have to burn and kill. Clearly, the Mandalisation of rural Bihar has sown the seeds for a caste conflagration which could assume frightening dimensions.

K.M. KISHAN



With his supporters, Pappu Yadav (extreme right)

SAIBAL DAS



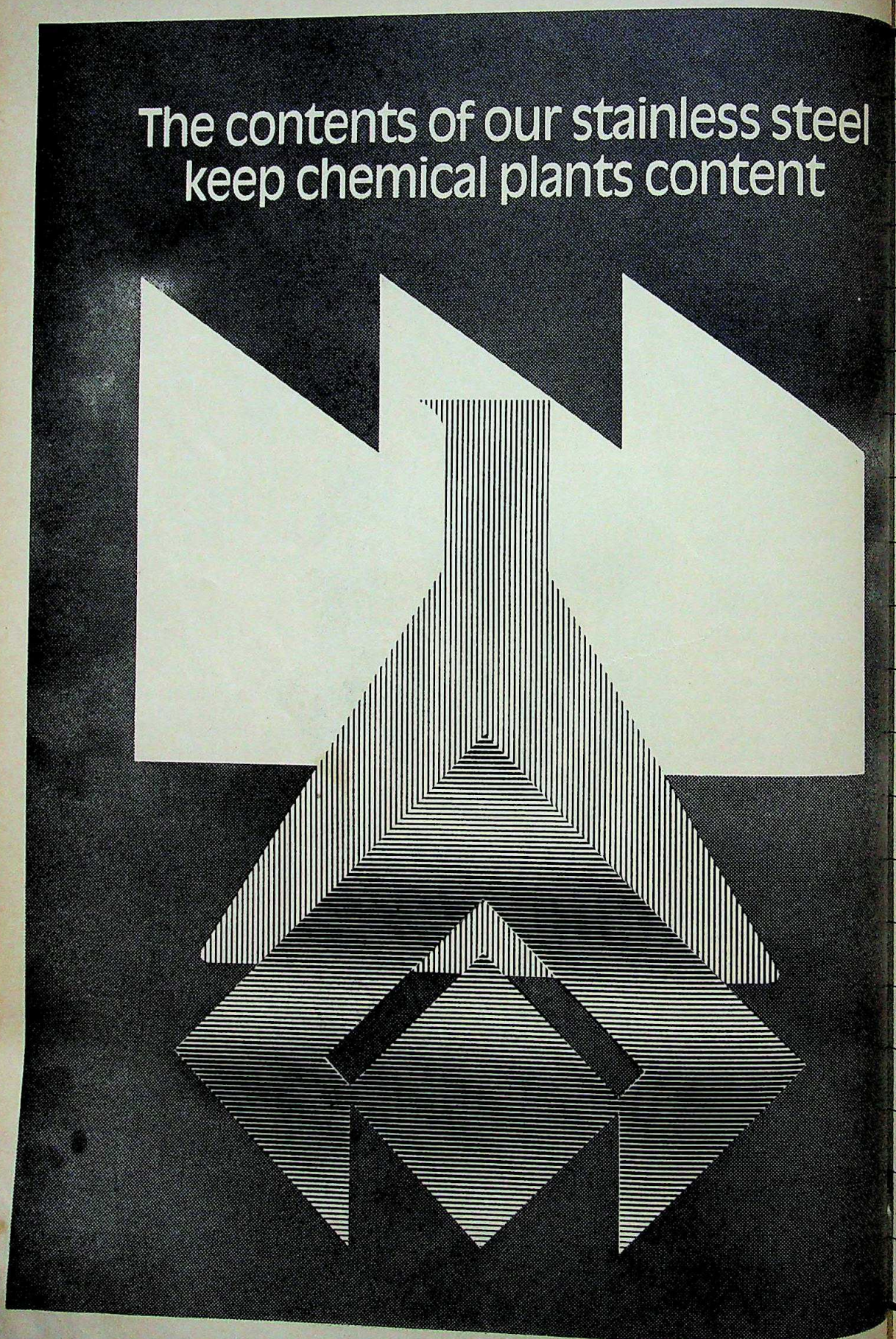
"Pappu Yadav came with 60 bus loads of armed men the night before the *Sadbhavna* rally, shouted abuses at the Bhumihars and started firing."

Ramshray Singh (left)

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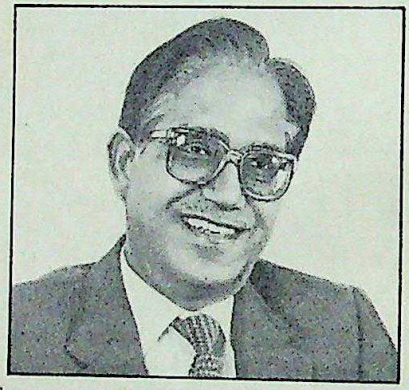
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PLANTATIONS, TECHNOLOGY AND PRODUCTIVITY

SPEECH OF THE CHAIRMAN, SHRI K.L. CHUGH, AT THE FOURTEENTH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE COMPANY AT HYDERABAD.

"An impression has gained ground, that the Industry is anxious to seek land ownership... the Industry does not wish to own land. The Industry only wishes to develop plantations on degraded forest lands, through an arrangement which is practical and gives the Industry right to receive the produce for commercial use... These plantations will create extensive rural employment and will contribute towards achieving the National objective of a 3% annual growth rate in productive employment."



Ladies and Gentlemen,

Last year's results are significant milestones and a testimony to the hard work of your employees. **Productivity continues to be pursued with relentless vigour and has borne abundant fruit. Capacity utilisation at 134% is a record high; production at 83,923 t, sales at 84,888 t and turnover at Rs. 123.44 crores, have escalated impressively by 43%, 45% and 81% respectively, over the previous year on annualised basis.** Stemming from this, **profits before tax at Rs. 935.53 lakhs, have increased by 94% and profits after tax at Rs. 811.05 lakhs by a 100%!**

But a longer term analysis is a truer measure of your Company's value and performance: and in the first decade of commercial operations, a six-fold increase in turnover, a four-fold increase in the net worth, and a 115% increase in assets, coupled with the development of backward areas and the espousal of meaningful societal issues, bespeaks of your Company's growth and responsible corporate citizenship and is good cause to give you pride as owners.

However, to ensure the continuing profit, growth and survival of your Company in an increasingly competitive scenario, our future direction is to implement a market expansion strategy by entering the high value premium segment of the market whilst retaining our position in traditional strongholds. To effect this strategy planned investments are being made.

THE EMERGING CONTEXT, INDIA AND THE WORLD ORDER

The International Scene.

On the threshold of the 21st Century, our age is witnessing a metamorphosis in the world's politico-economic order. The "iron curtain" has been lifted from the East European Stage, and the sets are ready for the beginning of a new act. Economic blocks are forming on every continent. Witness the emergence of the E.E.C. in Europe, the America-Canada Trade Charter in North America, the C.A.C.M. in South America, the A.S.E.A.N. in the Far East, the recent call subsequent to Mr Nelson Mandela's release for an African common market, and nearer home the hopeful emergence of S.A.A.R.C. These economic blocks will be both bridges and borders. They will lead to Capital flows, Technology flows, R&D flows, and Human Resource and Skills flows, throughout the world. **No Nation, and no management, will be able to function effectively outside the imperatives of the emerging international context.**

To prosper and even to survive in the "new world", productivity movements within Nations will have to be intensified and accelerated. The vision of our National poet at the dawn of independence of "Where the world has not been broken into fragments by narrow domestic walls" is being given economic muscle and tangible form in our own age and time. The strategic economic issue of course is whether we are preparing ourselves effectively to be internationally relevant and competitive.

The National Scene.

Four decades of planned economic development in our country has dispelled the darkness of economic backwardness for millions of our citizens, but has left vast numbers of people relatively untouched and outside the stream of national progress. The planned growth rate of 5% during the 7th Plan period has been achieved and the Planning Commission's proposal of a 5.5% growth rate for the 8th Plan beginning this year seems eminently achievable. There are however areas of grave concern which must compel national debate and action. The recently published Approach Paper to the 8th Plan entitled "Towards Social Transformation" focuses on these problems.

"There is no conflict between environmentalists and the Industry. The Industry itself must be allowed to become a most zealous guardian and developer of the environment... If we learn to give back to Mother Earth what we take from her we will be repaid manifold."

— Population is a bed-rock issue. Inspite of three decades of family planning, our population is likely to cross the one billion mark by the turn of this century. **Your Company's strategy of encouraging the employee wives to organise themselves as Bhadrachalam Mahila Samiti and Vanita Mandali and project our social face — giving them a status within the Organisation and further support in terms of financial incentives — has achieved the miracle of most workmen, despite their rural background, planning their families with two children.**

— The strained Balance of Payment circumstances is actually symptomatic of the fact, that even after four decades of Independence, Indian industry in large measure is not as yet globally competitive. Long years of coddling protection have resulted in a high cost, low value added economy which creates an uncompetitive national psyche. India today is the biggest debtor in Asia and the continuing recourse to debt has inhibited the development of an equity culture which must face risk and accept accountability. Increased imports without any concomitant increase in exports, resulting in a situation where foreign exchange reserves are a mere 7/8 weeks requirement , is a cause for serious concern. This concern can only mount as the Middle East crisis casts an even greater burden on our foreign exchange reserves owing to the escalation of oil and petroleum. Your Company's endeavour towards conservation of foreign exchange through import substitution and earning of foreign exchange through exports are meaningful and laudable. But a few imaginative changes in the policy framework governing the Paper and Board Industry, effective steps can be taken to make the Paper and Board Industry a substantial foreign exchange earner.

— The unemployment problem continues to loom large on the Indian scene. We must find meaningful solutions to this problem, without merely "papering over the cracks". The Plan

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calls for a 3% annual increase in productive employment. This is a measure that must elicit support throughout the National fabric. The Paper and Board Industry has the potential of creating employment for lakhs and helping resolve this mammoth National problem.

Your Company's strategy for the future would before be

- To invest in, and implement measures to make your organisation viable and competitive not only in the domestic sphere but also in the unfolding international scenario.
- To design and tailor its business activities, such that whilst stake holders' aspirations are satisfied, the Nation's interests are subserved.

As your organisation involves itself in these mentous tasks we will work in tandem with vernment and other stake holders to attain cess. It is in this perspective that issues taining to Plantation, Technology and ductivity, must receive immediate and urgent ention of the Government and Industry.

PLANTATIONS, TECHNOLOGY AND PRODUCTIVITY

ational Land Management Policy.

In their quest for progress, nations and porations formulate strategies which are founded he Natural National Advantages which they might sess. In India, a natural National advantage is tinental land area. Out of a total land mass of 328 ion hectares, an area of 80 million hectares (24%) ying unproductive and fallow. This land is an inert ional asset, waiting for a rational land agement policy, and the infusion and application echnology and human skills, to actualise its ductivity and wealth-creating potential. Whilst the proach Paper to the Eighth Plan is cognisant of need to increase biomass resources through the elopment of wastelands, it does not underscore urgency to reforest fallow, barren and productive erstwhile forest lands.

In no other major Paper producing country, es the Industry depend mainly on natural forests its raw material. A rational land management icy will encourage backward integration by the ustry into plantation management (which is rently restricted to tea, coffee, rubber, etc.)and uld be an enlightened and progressive measure. vernment should consider legislation which would ke available use of wastelands in the proximity of s to organise, create, and maintain, technology- and scientifically managed plantations.

An impression has gained ground, that the ustry is anxious to seek land ownership/ ment for undertaking plantations. I would like to le very categorically that the Industry does not h to own land. The Industry only wishes to elop plantations on degraded forest lands, ough an arrangement which is practical and es the Industry right to receive the produce for mmercial use. Your Company has initiated logues with the Government to develop such a tem.

But land is an inelastic resource and the nsidered opinion is that a third of the land area ould be under good forest cover to maintain the ological balance. In India, we have already nsgressed this limit. Today, barely 11.5% of the d area is under green crown cover. Uncontrolled and indiscriminate tree felling, mainly for fuelwood and small timber requirement of an exploding population has rapidly depleted the country's forest cover. I do not believe that we can find an alternative fuel resource for our masses, particularly the poor, in the next few decades. And this would make it impossible to conserve the existing forests. Our experience of the past 40 years corroborates this view. At the time of Independence, of the 75 million hectares of land under forest, approximately 55 million hectares were dense forests. Forty years later, according to the data collected by the National Remote Sensing Agency in 1989, the dense forest cover has come down to 38 million hectares. The need therefore is to bring in bio technology and scientific techniques that would create man-made forests with speed and certainty.

> ***"Increased imports without any concomitant increase in exports, resulting in a situation where foreign exchange reserves are a mere 7/8 weeks requirements, is a cause for serious concern... But with a few imaginative changes in the policy framework... effective steps can be taken to make the Paper and Board Industry a substantial foreign exchange earner."***

Technology inputs would enhance the productivity and disease/pest resistance of the planting material, through an upgradation of its genetic qualities. Clonal selection, and multiplication through vegetative propagation, when applied judiciously will revolutionise the productivity of the land and ensure a qualitatively superior and uniform produce from plantations. The application of these techniques has resulted in dramatic increase in output in countries like Brazil, Portugal, Spain, Congo and Australia, where the productivity per hectare is 10-20 times higher than in India. You will share our pride, as we report, that your Company has adapted this technology successfully and over the next two years the plantation programme will be supplied with these high yielding, disease-resistant clones.

Your Company's association with the ITC Group gives it access to a substantial pool of knowledge and skills in Agri-Sciences and a network of linkages which can be the main spring of a sustainable competitive advantage.

Your Company's Farm Forestry Programme continues to make progress. 3,000 hectares, involving 2,500 farmers, have already been covered under this scheme and with the recently concluded agreement with the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD), its implementation will be accelerated. Farm Forestry Programmes however provide only a short-term answer, and that too for limited capacities. The long term solution would come from the involvement of People and Technology in raising man-made forests on the lands lying wasted today.

The Employment Effect.

Whilst discussing issues pertaining to Plantations, Technology and Productivity, the employment effect is perhaps its greatest redeeming feature. Modern plantations are highly capital and labour intensive. It is estimated that to raise one hectare of successful commercial plantation, investment of the order of Rs. 25,000/- would be required. To meet the Industry's objective of raising 4 lakh hectares of plantations to satisfy the raw material requirements for the growing demand for its products, a sum of Rs. 150 crores would be required annually over a period of 7 years among Industry members. These plantations will create extensive rural employment and will contribute towards achieving the National objective of a 3% annual growth rate in productive employment.

Prospects — Exports — The Policy Framework.

It is estimated that the Societal annual demand for the Industry's products by the turn of the century will escalate from the present level of 25 lakh tonnes by a 100% to over 50 lakh tonnes. In the international arena, many paper exporting countries do not have the land mass to produce their own raw material requirements, and are dependent on imports for their own production. These factors constitute significant export opportunities for the Industry in India in general, and your organisation in particular.

To realise the full potential of these opportunities, **the policy framework must facilitate the creation and maintenance of high yield, high technology plantations,** as already mentioned, **and in addition encourage and support technological upgradation for quality manufacture at competitive costs.** The cost of energy must receive special attention of the Industry, as it is highly escalatory in nature. In addition, increasing the cash compensatory support for the export of paper to 20%, will considerably strengthen the exportability of the Industry and help it to carve its niche in the global market.

If the policy framework is restructured in the context of the suggestions outlined, within the span of 8/10 years, there will be quantum improvement in productivity, and re-generation/ revitalisation of forests and environmental resources. **The produce of Indian Industries will not only be sufficient to meet internal demand, but India could become a major exporter, with earnings escalating dramatically to the neighbourhood of $ 200 million annually.**

CONCLUSION

Changes in the environment both within the country and internationally, are creating a new spectrum of challenges and opportunities for your Company, the Industry, and our Nation. Some two decades ago, the world watched in disbelief as India achieved a green revolution. We have an opportunity to make history repeat itself. Through Plantations, Technology and Productivity, and with a sense of National mission, it is possible to initiate a Tree Revolution which whilst greening the environment will become a pillar of strength for the country's economy.

There is no conflict between environmentalists and the Industry. The Industry itself must be allowed to become a most zealous guardian and developer of the environment, for it is from the environment that the Industry gets life and succour. If we learn to give back to Mother Earth what we take from her we will be repaid manifold. Then posterity can record that this generation of Indian leadership in Agri-Industries, is the generation that made the decisive difference.

This does not purport to be a report of the proceedings of the 14th Annual General Meeting.

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The Sunday Specials



FOR some years, *The Sunday Observer* basked in the glow of its unique status—the first Sunday English-language newspaper in its own right. This status could not last, and *The Sunday Mail* flew its flag, promisingly at first, but soon changed commanders and faded out of the competition.

A more formidable challenge has recently been launched by *The Times of India* by seeking to make the Sunday edition of the paper a distinct entity. That *The Sunday Observer* is taking this challenge seriously is apparent from its decision to give itself a face-lift and an acknowledgement by its editor that times change and with it the need to change the paper.

Unlike in Britain, where quality newspapers as distinct from tabloids publish six days of the week, leaving the seventh day to the Sunday press, the Indian newspapers are a seven-days-a-week phenomenon. The Sunday editions of major newspapers are distinct only in the excess advertisements they carry and in their magazine sections.

The Sunday Observer hit the jackpot because it evolved a success formula based on the valid assumption that on Sundays, readers require a different fare from the daily routine beyond the souped-up version of the daily paper. Hence the accent was on more coverage of the arts, an assortment of the off-beat stories and a willingness to give a new and more comprehensive view of the events of the week.

But the *Observer's* appeal soon began to dim because insufficient attention was paid to revitalising the success formula and seeking new areas of interest. Despite the *Mail*, the *Observer* remained smug in the belief that its product was superior and hence beyond the reach of invaders.

Both the *Mail* and the *Observer* have, in the meantime, changed hands. The *Mail* shows little sign of recovery, despite its multi-city printing, but the *Observer* has woken up to the challenge of *The Sunday Times of India*, as it rather grandly calls itself, its title-piece deliberately designed to fudge its parenthood.

The Times of India's assumption is that if the Sunday papers can thrive in Britain, they can in India as well. Its model seems to be London's *Sunday Times*, and certainly in its design, it is seeking to maintain its distinction from the other six days of the week.

Compared to the week-day paper,



The accent is on a more comprehensive coverage of the arts, off-beat stories and weekly events.

the first few issues of *The Sunday Times of India* are a vastly improved product. There is an attempt to avoid printing errors, an effort to make news stories readable and a desire to spread the net of stories as wide as possible to maintain readership interest.

Somewhat uncertain about its future, the *Observer* has hitched on to the teenager, in a weekly supplement, to find a new mooring. Its first new-look issue had a desperate air in the pages it gave to US News & World Report in covering international events. That mistake was corrected in the next issue by an attempt to use its own resources or specially assigned people to write on international affairs.

The panic at the *Observer* is perhaps unnecessary. *The Sunday Times of India* certainly has the resources to give the *Observer* a run for its money. But until The Times of India group revises its strategy of achieving success on the cheap, the *Observer* does not have very much to fear.

India's newspaper managers have still to learn the lesson that the success of Britain's Sunday press depends upon giving it a totally separate identity, even if the product belongs to the owners of the week-day paper. Hence *The Sunday Times* of London has its own editor, a separate staff and now even a separate building. The premise is that the Sunday reader does not require merely a rehash of the daily press but a totally different orientation of the stories. Therefore, only a full-time editor and staff devoted to the Sunday paper can do justice to their task.

The Sunday Times of India has the same editor and staff as the daily paper. Mere typographical changes and outside columnists will not set the Jamuna—or the other rivers—on fire. It is, of course, cheaper to run things *The Times of India* way, but saving money does not ensure success in a competitive field. Perhaps the major Indian papers also suffer from the constraint that Sunday is a bonanza day for advertisements and if they separate the Sunday paper from the daily, their circulation figures, in addition to profits, would be affected.

If the daily is itself launching a Sunday paper, the profits question is not material because the organisation will make equal, if not more, money. Taking a paper's Sunday circulation out of the reckoning of the daily is a more difficult issue.

But as long as the daily English-language press fights shy of spending money and cutting the umbilical cord between the Sunday and daily papers, *The Sunday Observer* does not have much to worry about—if it continues to offer a good product.

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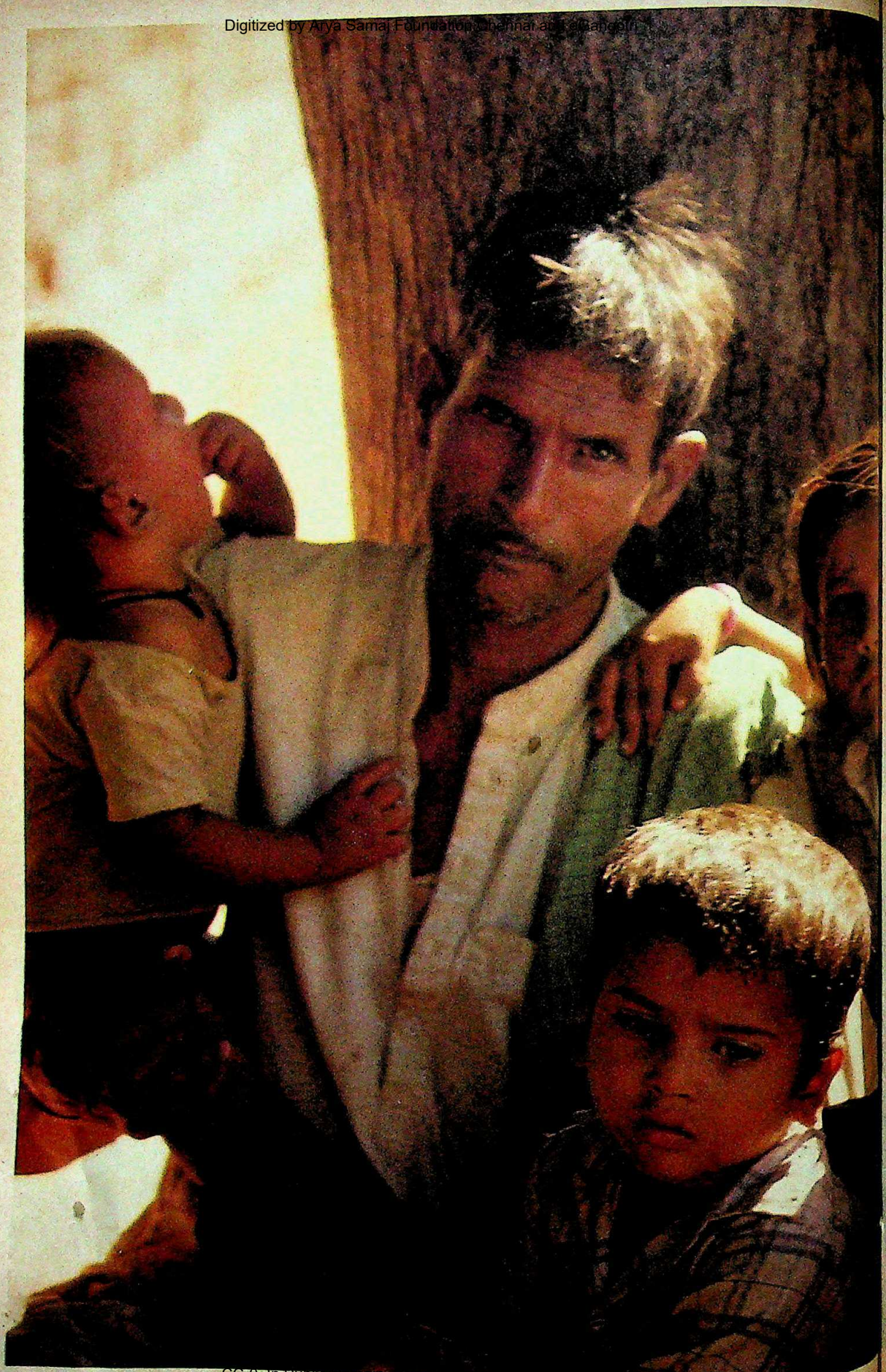


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MUSIC

Divine Pop

Religious songs are a rage

THE amplified songs that can be heard in an Ayyappa Temple on a narrow street corner in Madras have the popular *Hawa, Hawa* rhythm, but the chorus *Saranam, Ayyappa* that goes with it is as close to pop beats as a nunnery is to a discotheque. This *desi* version of the east-west fusion, a sort of divine pop, is sweeping across the south. Paeans to the pantheon of Hindu gods are selling fast and they are being devoured by devotees almost as if they were *prasad* straight from the gods.

Fusing Pakistani singer Jahangir Khan's *Hawa Hawa* pop beat with the *Saranam Ayyappa* number is the work of Navin Daswani of Gitanjali Cassettes. The song was sung by K. Veeramani, whose name is synonymous with Ayyappa songs. This song, which was released in 1989, had already sold 40,000 tapes by the year-end. And it is still going strong. Says Daswani of his pop devotional hit: "Younger people today want easy catchy tunes, and not routine classical ones."

Clearly, devotional music is the new rage in the south. However, not all of it is of the finger-clinking, toe-tapping pop variety, but an increasing number of them are. Over the last two years sales of devotional tapes in the south have reached astronomical heights. For example, Sangeetha, the leading cassette company selling devotional songs alone sells more than one lakh such cassettes every month. And HMV sells more than 50,000 tapes.

As the demand for devotional music set to disco has shot up, HMV in the last five years has increased the number of its retail outlets from 4,000 to 25,000 and the number of dealers from 50 to 2,000 in the south alone. And producers are confident that the good times will continue. "Even if we stop bringing out new compositions we can still make profits because existing ones are going to sell year after year," says Navin Daswani.

Every month nearly 20 new tapes hit the stands, and according to producers very few fail. Says T.S. Sridhar, divisional sales manager of HMV: "In the last three years we have increased the number of dealers from 50 to 2,000 in the south." In fact, HMV's mainstay in the south is religious songs.

Why has there been this sudden surge in sales? People in the industry attribute it to several factors. For one, today almost anyone can afford a tape recorder of some sort. Also, prices of cassettes have dropped from around Rs 35-Rs 40 to around Rs 25. Says Bala Subramaniam of Lakshmi Musicals: "As far as film music is concerned, any cassette with Ilayaraja's name on it is a hit. In the case of devotionals, any well-produced tape will be a sure success."

Another advantage for producers of devotional music is the fact that devotional subjects can be recorded without any problems of copyright. Most traditional subjects are centuries old and the original composers are unknown or forgotten.

The sale of devotional cassettes has a peculiar rhythm of its own. Each season has its celebrity gods when the demand for related devotional tapes shoots up. For instance, during the Sabarimalai season (November to January), a virtual shower of Ayyappa tapes from different companies floods the music shops. Topping the popularity charts as far as devotional music is concerned is Veeramani who has sung more Ayyappa songs than even he can remember. Another Ayyappa favourite is the renowned Malayalam megasinger K.J. Jesudas. An Ayyappa composition during the season sells as many as 5,000 tapes on release.

Another good season for devotional music is the Tamil month of Adi (July-August), the season for Amman (the south Indian avatar of goddess Kali) worship. And during this time the singer most in demand is L.R. Easwari, whose shrill voice and rhythmic modulations, a generation of raunchy actresses danced to in umpteen Tamil films. That voice gives to bland devotional music a vigorous tone that goes down extremely well with the frenzy that accompanies Amman worship in Tamil Nadu.

Several film singers and classical musicians have been lured by the booming sales of holy pop. As a result, all the south's top playback singers, S.P. Balasubramaniam, Jesudas, Dr Rajkumar and P. Suseela are chart-toppers in devotional music. In Karnataka, classical vocalist Bhimsen Joshi is better known for his devotional music.

And Carnatic vocalist Bala Murali Krishna is poised to enter the *Guinness Book of Records* for recording nearly 125 tapes with a single company (Sangeetha), more than half of which are devotional tunes. M.S. Subbulakshmi, the high priestess of classical vocalists is happy that devotional music is finally getting popular. However, at the same time she sounded a note of dismay: "If you simply close your eyes and sing, *bhakti* does not come."

Veeramani, however, argues that if devotional music is to appeal to the man on the street who has no ear for classical ragas, a mix of the popular is essential. Adds maestro Bala Murali Krishna, who claims to be the pioneer of modern devotional music: "Even temples are commercialised, so why not music?"

—KAVITHA SHETTY



The finger-snapping, toe-tapping, filmi quality of devotional songs is responsible for their growing popularity.

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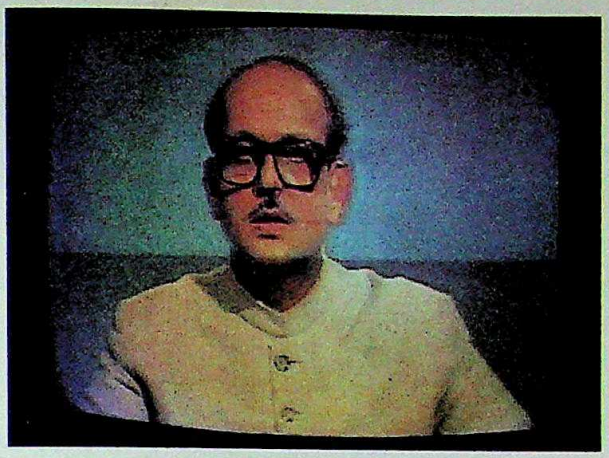
◆ Just when serials on television were getting dull comes a real life soap opera. *No, Prime Minister*. Each episode on the trials and tribulations of V.P. Singh has a cliff-hanger ending: how will the hero get out of this tricky situation?

Whenever there's a crisis, Singh rushes to the people—directly through Doordarshan. When Devi Lal breathed down his neck in August, he used his Independence Day address—telecast live and repeated often—to score points. Again, under siege by the anti-reservation agitation he went straight to the nation—much like the presidential state-of-the-nation address in the US. Nothing comes between the prime minister and the people, except the small screen.

◆ Communal harmony is DD's new theme song. There is *Sadbhavana*, the one minute poems on the universality of all religions which come like instant flashes. Saeed Naqvi's series of five-minute films on the subject are being recycled: Chinese-origin women performing Durga puja in Calcutta, the gurdwara in Kedarnath which has a cross, an Om and a crescent et al. It might be the way for instant communal harmony. But they have evoked a good response.

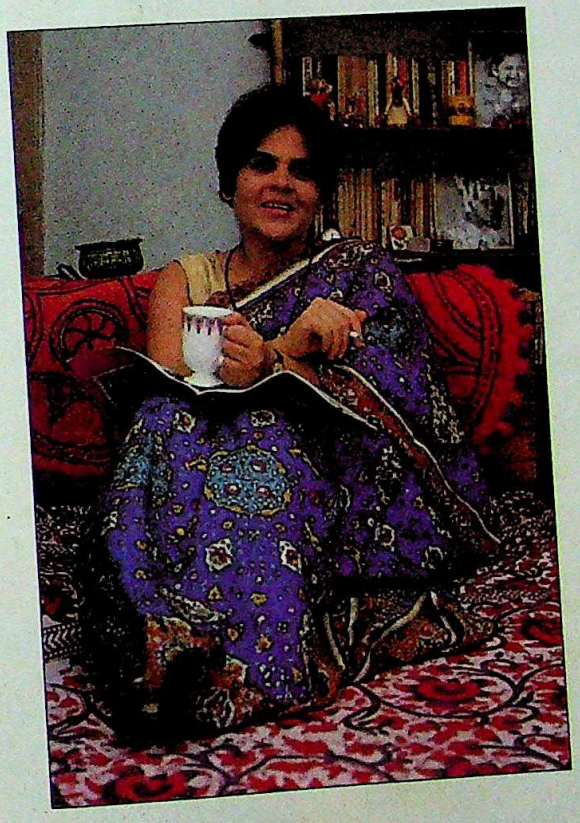
TV seems to have taken up the Home Ministry's burden: Mandi House commissioned a series of panel discussions on the Ram Janmabhoomi-Babri Masjid issue—flagged off on the eve of Advani's arrest and running straight through to October 30.

◆ Interesting programmes seem to be either ignored or shoved to Dracula hour. The tele film, *Rain Basera* by the talented Sai Paranjpe (*Chasme Badoor* and *Sparsh*) about the problems of single women—three women paying guests—languished in the can for two years and was then shown at half past the Cinderella hour. Perhaps it was a case of 'Goodnight sweet ladies, goodnight'.

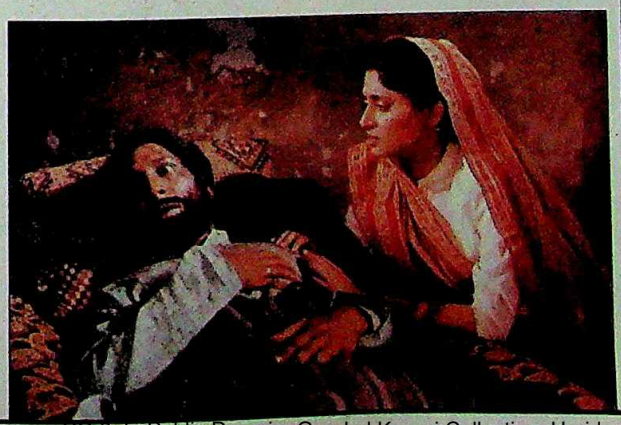


▲ Prime Minister V.P. Singh: repeating the tear-jerker act

▼ Sai Paranjpe: receiving indifferent treatment



▼ Kumar's *Kahan Gaye Woh Log*: endless boredom



◆ Patriotism seems to be the password for getting into DD these days. How else can the return of Dheeraj Kumar be explained. His soporific serial *Kahan Gaye Woh Log* on the unknown freedom fighters replaced the sleeping pill. And now he's back with more of the same. The unputdownable Kumar should at least be credited for trying: he's got Rahi Masoom Raza (*Mahabharata* and now *Chunni*) to write for him. The first episode has Archana Joglekar, the rebel with two causes: freedom and women's education. The nation heaved a sigh of relief when Kumar and his *log* went off the air. But, alas, somebody in Mandi House must have asked: "Kahan gaye woh log?"

◆ The *Khula Manch* high drama continues, like a thriller with a new twist each time. If nothing else, the controversy keeps the audience interest alive: there's more light than heat being generated. This time: rumours that the presenters would be replaced by Priya Tendulkar doing a real life *Rajni* with the ministers. P. Upendra had promised to limit three programmes to each team. But this seems to be a programme in search of presenters. PTI-TV is disillusioned. And Tendulkar didn't oblige. And so the show goes on. As for the next time, it's Sashi Kumar and Nalini Singh once again.

—MADHU JAIN

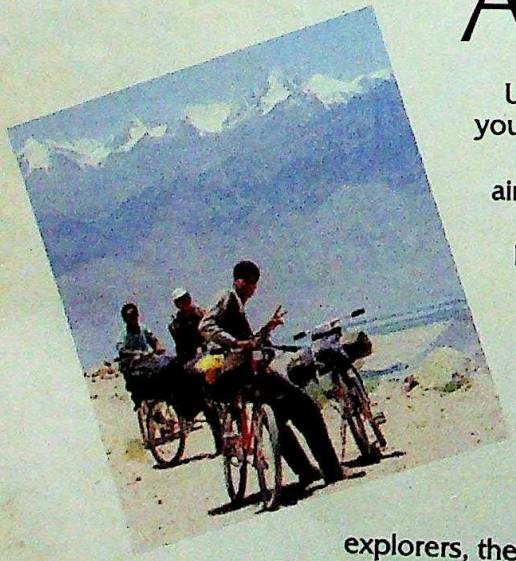
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The road is the highest he
The bikes are Rangers.



And the boys, qui sim



Up at Khardung La Pass. The wind howls around you eerily, creeping down to your very bones.

They give you oxygen, cold clean air you breathe in greedily.

Revived, you stagger to the sign beside the road.

Autofocus. That's Mahesh, Preetpal and Ankit. That's Rajan waving V for Victory.

Click. Then the tears flow.

Biking in the Himalayas

Meet our intrepid explorers, the Jumping Nuts. Probably the youngest team to

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est he world.



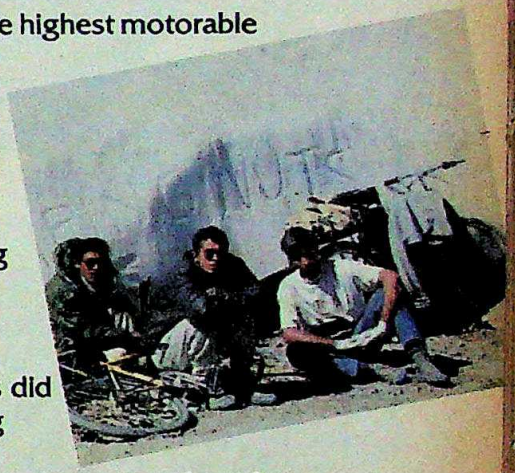
make it to Khardung La Pass, the highest motorable road in the world. And the first to do it on bicycles.

Mountain biking, they've found, is a test of endurance for both man and bike.

You're up against the elements: the heavy rain, the fog and the strong head winds. The bone-jarring, teeth-rattling rough roads.

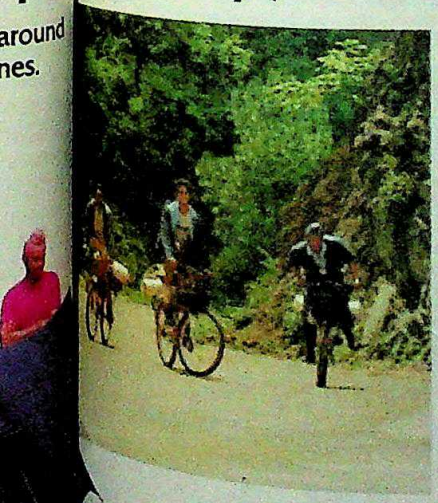
Skimp on rations as the Nuts did and you take the risk of running out of energy.

Your body may well give up on you, even though *you're* ready to go on.



qui simply, are Nuts.

around
nes.



The Way of the Ranger

To their credit, the Nuts came through. As did the Hero Ranger.

On rugged terrain, the all-terrain bike is tough enough to take the hardest knocks.

The fat balloon tyres, with their deep treads, give you hard-biting traction.

And the die-cast brakes provide all the stopping power you need on steep descents.

With the Hero Ranger, you can go where no bike has gone before.



HERO Ranger

GO WHERE FEW WOULD DARE TO GO

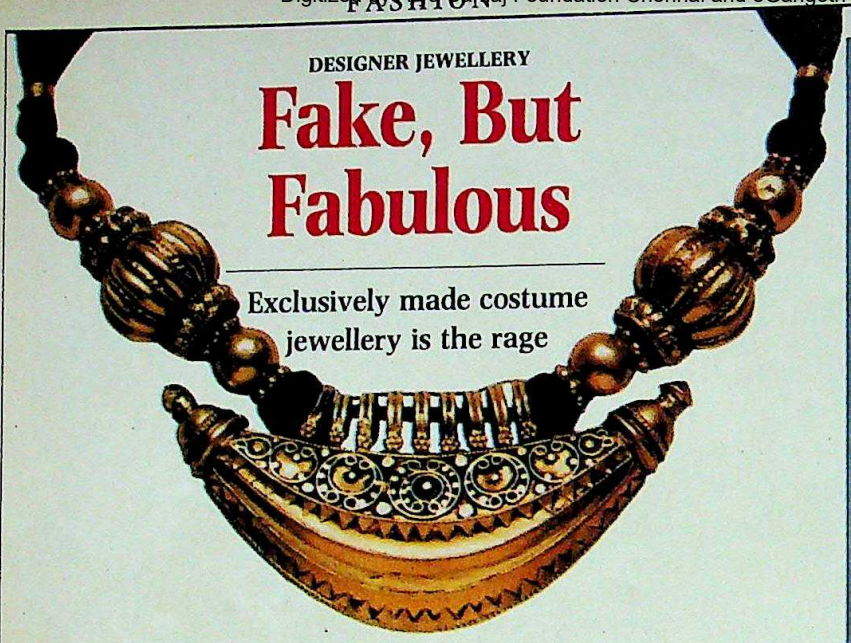
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DESIGNER JEWELLERY

Fake, But Fabulous

Exclusively made costume jewellery is the rage





LESS than half a decade ago, the term "designer jewellery" would have conjured up wistful visions of international exclusivity like Christian Dior and Gucci—all of them located financially in the stratosphere, out of reach of a slobbering middle class. But then suddenly designer stuff went democratic: it became affordable for those who wanted to look better but just couldn't pay as much as the affluent elite for a dangle from the ears or a choke on the throat. Now, having taken a long, nomadic route through the West, designer jewellery has blazed its way into India as well. And it is adapting to Indian aesthetics with remarkable pace and passion. It looks good, it mimics traditional designs, stands western virtuosity on its head—and to top it all you don't have to pay a king's ransom for it. You can pick up a pair of funky ear rings for as little as Rs 300 or splurge Rs 18,000 on a nifty look-alike of an antique set.

Interestingly, the range of newborn aficionados of designer jewellery are not just restricted to the chi chi. Aside from glitzy film stars and snooty social climbers even the relatively better-off college girl—who cannot afford real jewellery but is not about to wear clumsily-crafted costume doodads—is willing to spend a little extra to get out of the fashion rut. Now, if that isn't equitable distribution of aesthetics and body baubles, what is? "The idea behind designer jewellery," says Sunita Singh, a college student, "is to look good without paying too much." The upper crust of women, used to being loaded down with nothing less than gold, are standing in line to compete with adolescents who wouldn't know the difference between fakery and the real thing. As long as it glitters and is not well, gold, it doesn't really matter.



Admittedly, it's getting increasingly difficult to tell the difference. Today, the wealthy socialite wouldn't think twice about mingling "fake" designer jewellery with accessories worth lakhs. Says Nandini Mohindra, whose sleek and clean-cut jewellery is on show at New Delhi's Mutiny, the high fashion garment boutique in the plush locality of Greater Kailash: "Designer jewellery means that one has made the effort to create a piece that is exclusive."

Not that all women are taken in by the glitter. Says Rumila Danan, a collector of the 'real stuff' disparagingly: "Designer jewellery is a short-term fad w no investment value. And it does have any particular aesthetic quality it." Moreover, she dismisses it as "reeks of the common".

But that hasn't put a damper on t designer fad. Spearheading the "re lution" are shops like Art Karat a Mutiny in Delhi and Aara, Paja a Artistic in Bombay. And the leitmot their jewellery ranges from the tr tional to the modern. According to As Kamal Modi, owner of Art Karat, the an equal demand for both. And at pr that are as unreal as the trinkets.

For instance, an exquisite go plated necklace liberally studded w semi-precious stones costs Rs 4,00 The price of the real thing would ha been astronomical. Most pieces at A Karat are 95 per cent silver with 5 p cent gold-plating. The shop has monthly sale of Rs 8 lakh to Rs 10 lak including export sales.

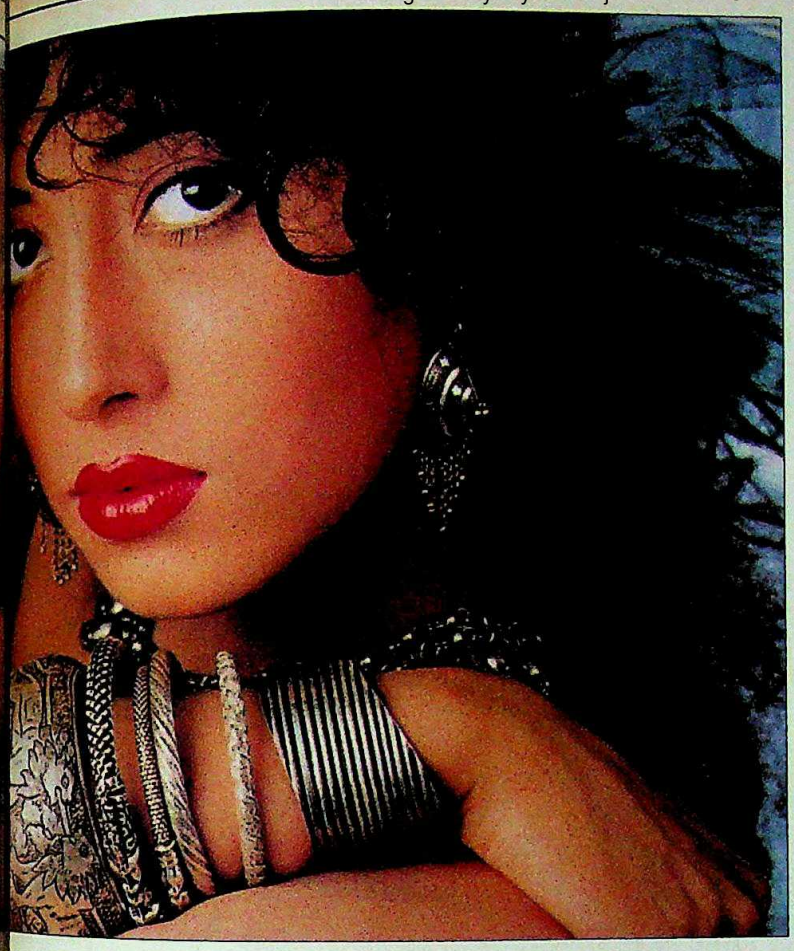
Similarly, Mutiny is doing strong business in silver and gold-plat jewellery. Says owner Ajay Ghan "People now want something a li more aesthetic and original." With hesitation, they fork out Rs 300 for pair of a la mode earrings and Rs 1,2

for earrings

Meera N lery to Bina View—in th Khas village lets—is mu she says sh prices rang Rs 3,000, w

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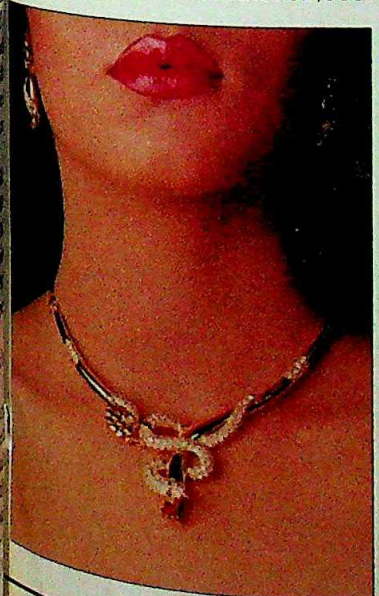


well with prices ranging from Rs 400 to an astounding Rs 4,000. Says an ardent fan, perhaps a bit wildly: "Their jewellery can give Dior or Cartier a real run for their money."

In Madras, upmarket fashion boutiques like Amrapali and a few in the popular Alsa Mall have started stocking chunky silver jewellery, coveted with no mean passion by the college-going crowd and the working woman in her mid-30s. While gold jewellery, the mainstay of high fashion in the south, will not be elbowed on to a slower track, there is a discernible change: now women can be seen buying Rs 500 silver bangles.

for earrings and a matching necklace.

Meera Nayar—who supplies jewellery to Bina Ramani's Room with a View—in the capital's ritzily rustic Hauz Khas village and to various other outlets—is mum about sales figures. But she says she isn't complaining. Her prices range between Rs 300 and Rs 3,000, with the bulk under Rs 2,000.

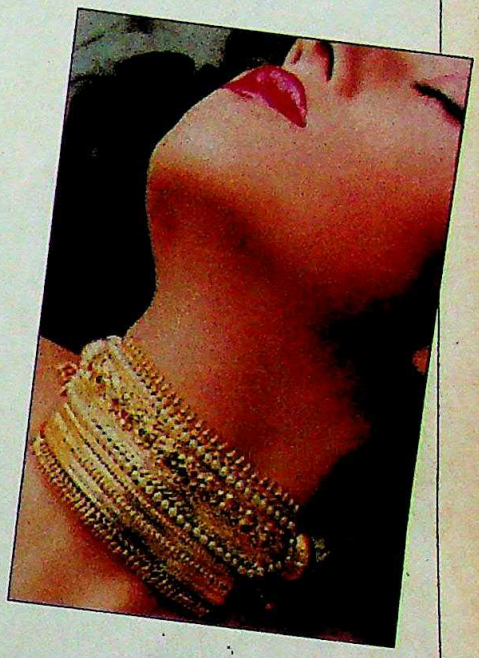


Zany designs: heralding a fashion revolution

"My aim," she says, "is to try and keep the prices as low as possible so that its appeal is broad-based."

MOST of the turnover, naturally, is in Bombay, that city of fickle fashions. Among the most popular names is Zawars which stocks items by well-known designer Jamini Ahluwalia. Its stuff, which is an extremely hot draw with the college crowd, ranges between Rs 300 and Rs 900. Other stops for those smitten by the designer bug are Aura at Chowpatty, Legend on Altamount Road which deals only in cubic zirconia, and Artistic, which is the brainchild of Sunita Pitamber, specialising in heavy *kundan*. Pitamber, besides hawking out of two outlets in Bombay, also supplies her creations to the exclusive Harrods in London.

Among the other makers of the fabulous fakes is Aara. Its pieces are made in pure silver *jharao* with semi-precious stones and are copies of antique jewellery found in museums and decrepit royal houses. Paja at Kemps Corner is a green recruit but is doing very



Naturally, the ultimate market is international. Designer jewellery has phenomenal export potential. According to figures culled from the Ministry of Commerce, between 1980 and 1981, India exported non-gold jewellery worth Rs 1.40 crore; by 1989-90, the figure had shot up to Rs 11.75 crore. And there is a vast market still to be tapped abroad. But at the moment it is the domestic market that is thriving. And even though Indians will continue to retain a certain loyalty to gold since designer jewellery has no resale value, the boom is unlikely to let up in a hurry.

Especially since designer jewellery allows anyone to flash the tinsel without having to fork out a fortune.

—KUSUM SAWHNEY

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The tough body of the armoured personnel carrier. The confidence of the men inside. Now, both made possible on ISGEC's 2600T Double Action Hydraulic Press.

With the capacity of 2600 tonnes and a size of 3500mm x 3500mm, this Double Action Hydraulic Press has tremendous capabilities and is the first of its kind in the country.

It not only presses armoured steel having a UTS of 110kg/mm^2 at 1100°C, but also provides for cold water circulation through pressing



THE BODY OF INDIA'S MOST ADVANCED ARMOURED PERSONNEL CARRIER WILL BE MADE ON THE ISGEC 2600T DOUBLE ACTION HYDRAULIC PRESS.

tools for quenching. It even has provision for quick changing of tools by a moving bolster.

The confidence reposed in ISGEC by the Defence authorities is amply reflected in the large number of orders placed by them.

With its 2600 Tonne Double Action Hydraulic Press, ISGEC helps build machines for the future. To the Indian army, it adds more mettle.

CUSTOM BUILT BY ★ ISGEC ★

ISGEC

ENGINEERING TALENT YOU CAN TRUST

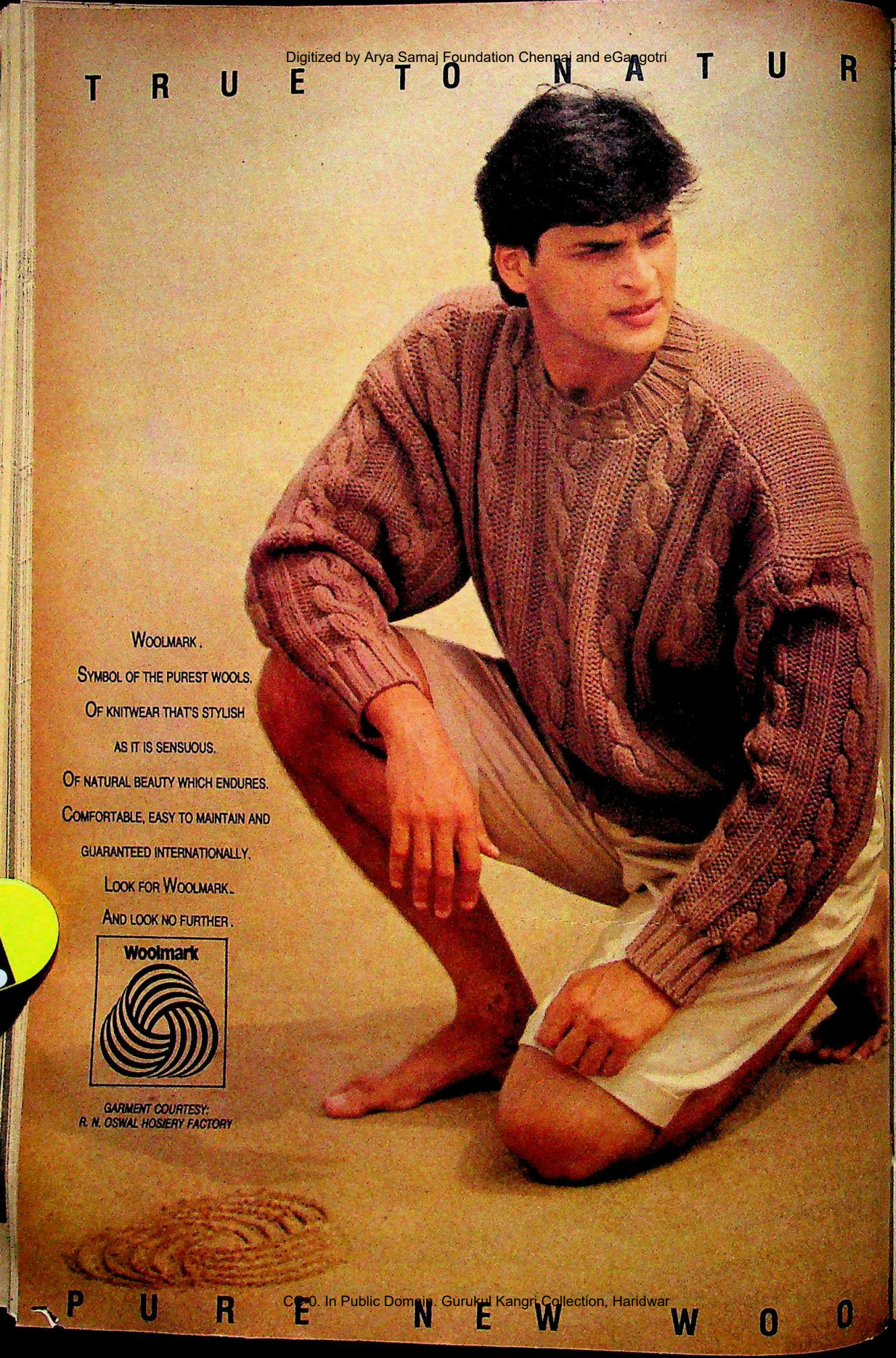
Works: Yamunanagar 135001 (Haryana). Tel.: 23391-23395. Grams: ISGEC. Fax: 01732-23691.
Branches at Bombay, Calcutta, Delhi and Madras.

React/1964/90A

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TRUE TO NATUR



WOOLMARK.
SYMBOL OF THE PUREST WOOLS.
OF KNITWEAR THAT'S STYLISH
AS IT IS SENSUOUS.
OF NATURAL BEAUTY WHICH ENDURES.
COMFORTABLE, EASY TO MAINTAIN AND
GUARANTEED INTERNATIONALLY.
LOOK FOR WOOLMARK.
AND LOOK NO FURTHER.

Woolmark

GARMENT COURTESY:
R. N. OSWAL HOSIERY FACTORY

PURE NEW WOO

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ADVERTISING

Cutting into Corners

Intrusions into editorial space raise hackles

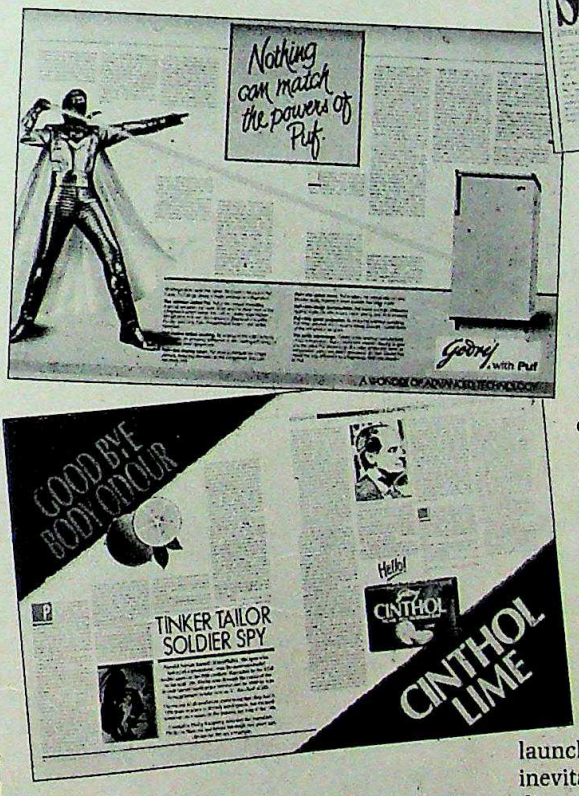
"News is the stuff between ads."
—Lord Thomson, press baron

OPEN any week-end supplement of mainline dailies, and you're likely to find a dozen tomatoes rolling all over the page, or gallons of edible oil pouring on the news columns. Finally, Indian publishers and advertisers are proving the Canada-born former proprietor of *The Times* (London), right. The spillage is all-consuming: big budget advertisers like Hindustan Lever and Godrej and smaller ones like Metro shoes have all got art directors working overtime creating advertisements that are unique, different and exclusive. Says Mohammed Khan, chief of Enterprise, the agency which created the Godrej tomato *puree* ad: "As ad clutter increases, agencies have to think of newer ways to attract attention."

Advertisers' supplement now often carry ads and logos in the middle of the page. Instead of a double-spread, some ad agencies buy triangular space on the left-top and right-bottom of pages. Film magazines now carry ads almost anywhere—running horizontally as strips, vertically as sidebars, and diagonally, interrupting the copy, with tantalising teasers like Dimple telling readers to turn to page 65 to find out something new that she's discovered (it is Crowning Glory, the soap). Says Rauf Ahmed editor of *Saturday Times* that pioneered these ads: "If the ad gets mileage without bringing down the dignity of the edit pages, I think it is fine."

But such advertisements haven't exactly been received with chest-thumping glee. Columnist Vinod Mehta severely castigated newspaper proprietors for treating readers with contempt. Mehta isn't alone: even editors of Lana Publications (*Stardust*, *Society*) are up in arms against further intrusion by advertisers onto edit pages. Living Media's Marketing Director Mohini Bhullar contends: "This is the best way to ruin publications, their layouts and credibility."

In fact, corrective action is being recommended within The Times group itself. In a surprising article in a *Response* supplement some two months ago, Pradeep Guha, chief of Times Response Department, questioned the ethic of carrying such ads. He argued that by carrying such ads publications ended up antagonising



Advertisements consuming corners and editorial space: vying for attention

and alienating their readers, affecting the credibility of the publication.

Lana Publications chief Nari Hira, who claims to have lost business worth Rs 40 lakh in the last eight months by turning down these ads, seems to agree with this view: "The Times group has shown nothing but contempt for its readers. Their magazines are nothing but catalogues of ads." But space sellers are thrilled as the money comes rolling in from all directions. A Times group senior journalist said with contempt: "This is the ultimate prostitution of our publications."

With full-page colour ads in premier dailies costing about Rs 3 lakh per insertion, editors often find the pressure tremendous and the money, frankly, tempting. Innovative ads carry a premium ranging between 15 and 75 per cent, depending on the amount of intrusion, space, and also



the rapport between the agency and the publication.

While print advertising continues to command the lion's share in ad budgets (at over Rs 600 crore) future trends are unmistakable: advertisers are opting for television (annual share: Rs 200 crore) for product launches.

While appointments, classifieds and tender offer ads (about 80 per cent of advertising), by their very nature, have got to appear in newspapers, magazines can only focus on crumbs—though lucrative—of consumer durables. However, television is a far more attractive medium for these products, especially national launches. Innovations, therefore, are inevitable. Says Rajesh Pant, associate director, Lintas: "On a flat, unidimensional surface without sound how do you make your ad stand out?"

While publishers might laugh their way to the bank right now, Christopher D'Rosario, creative director, Trikaya-Grey cautions: "You can cross the boundary of advertising and intrude the edit space only with grace; otherwise you are in trouble." Which is another way of repeating an old advertising dictum: the consumer is not a moron.

—SALIL TRIPATHI

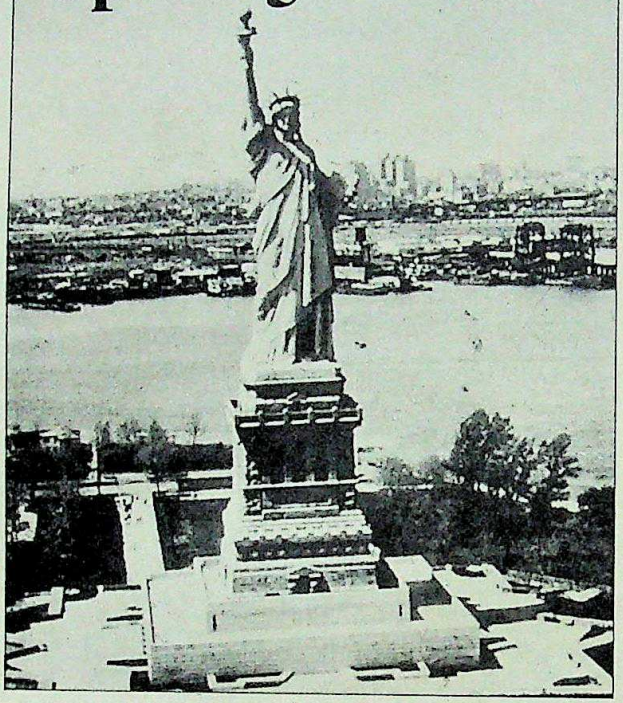
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UNITED STATES

Opening the Door

Courtesy, USIS



The US has plans to permit entry to a new kind of immigrant: the literate, the skilled and the affluent.

FOR thousands of hopeful immigrants the fabled American Green Card may no longer be a distant mirage. The US is on the verge of opening the "Golden Door" a crack wider to permit entry for the skilled and the affluent—a far cry from the "poor and huddled masses" that the Statue of Liberty has beckoned so far with its raised arm.

The optimism among the "teeming millions" stems from the landmark October 8 Family Unity and Employment Opportunity Act of 1990—or the Morrison Bill—passed by the House of Representatives and approved by senators after modifications. The bill will raise the yearly ceiling of immigrants from 5,40,000 to 7,00,000 till 1994 and 6,75,000 thereafter.

After both houses legislate the reconciled measure, the next stop for the bill is the White House. However, the bill's passage isn't going to be smooth sailing. Responding to pressures exerted from American labour, President George Bush has already threatened to veto it. According to him some parts of the bill are "too liberal".

However, if the bill gets past the presidential veto—and that is a big if—its most significant fallout will be for engineers, scientists, educationists, nurses, research experts and craftsmen. As many as 1,40,000 visas will be reserved for them. Clearly, the new open door policy is in response to the country's growing need to alleviate the "graying of America" and to prop up its sagging fortunes in world markets.

The Morrison Bill is dedicated ostensibly to family unity, but in reality it will at best allow into the US no more family members than thus far. Of the total immigration ceiling now of 5,40,000, about 90 per cent—or 4,86,000—are being used for various family preferences. Under the newly proposed measure, this figure will be pegged at 480,000.

Yet the bill is path-breaking. It will liberalise certain criteria under which family members are judged qualified to reside and work legally in the US. For instance, the spouses and children of newly-legalised immigrants will no more be subject to deportation even if they have entered the country or are in it illegally, provided the legal family member declares his or her intention to become a US citizen.

Also, marriage with a US citizen—a virtual passport to the land of milk and honey—will no longer be suspect. A person who can prove bona fide marriage to a citizen, even while facing deportation from the country, will still be allowed residency. As part of the new liberalisation package, a spouse under conditional residency will be allowed permanent status if he or she could prove that the marriage was entered into in good faith.

Moreover, the annual ceiling of 5,000 for asylum-seekers will also be scrapped to accommodate those awaiting resident status. Significantly, the annual quota of refugees—which currently stands at 1,20,000—will go up by 10,000 next year.

Apart from asylum-seekers, the new legislation will also make immigration for skilled workers easier. Under the new labour certification requirement, employers seeking to hire permanent workers will merely have to attest that a positive effort was made to find qualified US workers. An uncontested attestation for 30 days would mean approval. Earlier they had to prove to the Labour Department that they had "tried and failed" to find suitably qualified US workers—a process that took "from months to years".

This skilled labour category will also relax somewhat the current strict conditions for intra-company transfers of alien employees. Under the new bill "specialised knowledge" staff will be allowed to stay up to five years and executives and managers up to seven years.

That's not all. Immigration doors to investors who invest a minimum capital of $1 million in a business which also employs at least 10 US workers will be reopened. This door was shut in 1977 when the requirement was only $10,000.

Moreover, foreign students—who so far were not permitted to work off-campus—will be given off-campus work authorisation after they have completed one year of study and are in "good academic standing".

Predictably, the liberalisation of immigration law is raising the hackles of die-hard conservatives who are afraid of losing jobs to younger and more qualified immigrants. In India, the reaction to the threat of an increase in brain drain has been ambivalent. According to a senior Indian government official: "The inevitable loss of skilled people is now to some extent mitigated by the willingness of expatriate Indians to remit very large sums of valuable foreign exchange to India."

Whatever the opinion one thing is certain: if the proposed legislation gets to see the light of day, it will be cause for celebration among millions who can't wait to live the American Dream.

—AMRIT KAKARIA in New York

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How to give your employees the Red Label treatment

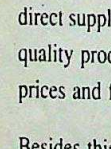
Over 50% of organisations that buy tea in bulk from their local suppliers are dissatisfied with the quality of their product. You don't have to be part of this 50%.

You can now give the same joy to your employees that thousands of people all over India wake up to.

Brooke Bond's Red Label. And it is not just popular at homes. A large number of organisations are already serving Red Label to their employees.

By dealing with Brooke Bond's Institutional Business Service you get four benefits. You get direct supplies, a wide range of quality products, competitive prices and free door delivery.

Besides this you'll get many more advantages.



A stimulating range of teas

You can choose from eight economy brands. Leaf teas include Taj Mahal Tea Bags, Special, Taj Mahal, Red Label and Gold Label. Among dust teas you have 3 Roses, Super Dust and A1.

For your executives there's Taj Mahal Tea Bags or Gold Label – a 100% Darjeeling leaf blend, with the Tea Board seal of approval.

Your tea can come in 21 kg bulk packs specially designed for industrial canteens. These packs are durable and retain the freshness of tea for more than a month.



A perky range of coffees

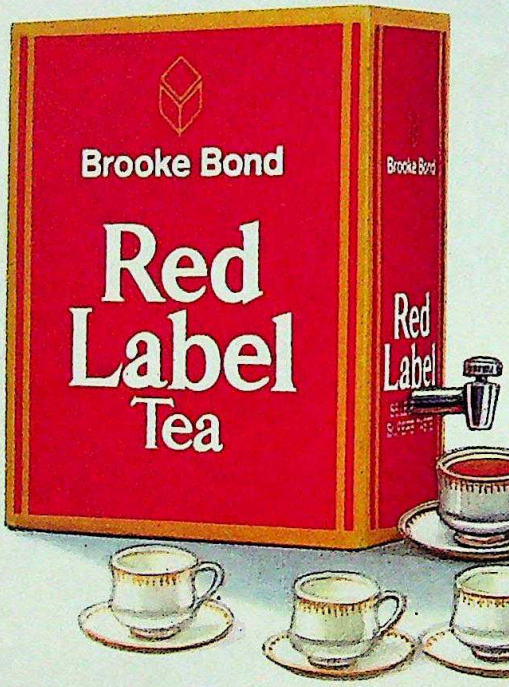
On the other hand, Bru is ideal for large organisations because of its strength and economy. It's one of the most preferred brands because of its cuppage. Rich Café is preferred at five star hotels.

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THE ECONOMICS OF NUCLEAR POWER.

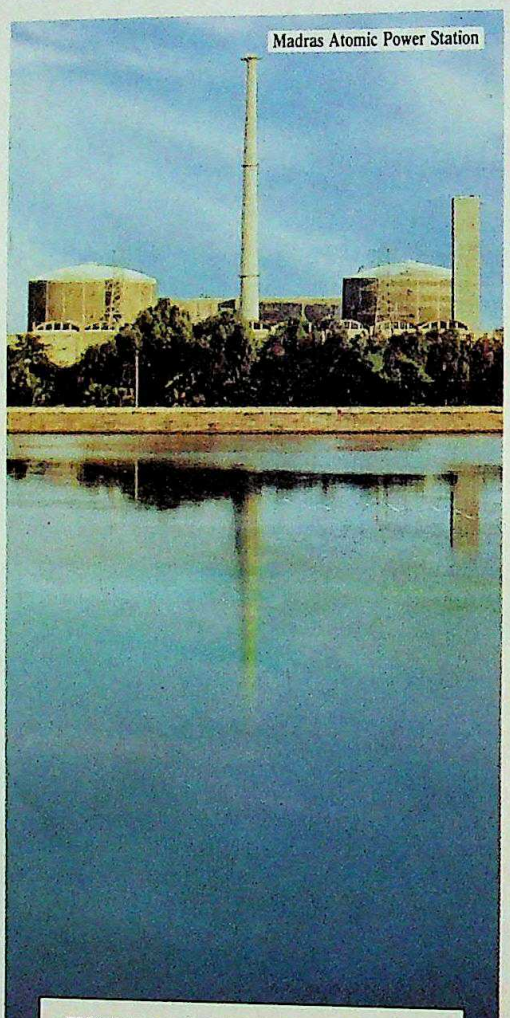
The power industry is a highly capital intensive one requiring huge investments to construct and commission (fixed capital cost) and to operate and maintain (variable operation & maintenance and fuelling costs) power stations. Capital costs, including interest during construction (IDC), are incurred in the initial six to eight years while variable costs are incurred from in-service date, for about 30 to 40 years till the plant is decommissioned. The Unit Energy Cost (UEC) of generation at any power station is calculated, based on annual cost, comprising of capital cost component (i.e. interest on capital and depreciation for an economic plant life of 25 years), O&M and fuelling charges and dividing these by the electrical energy generated during the year. This does not include transmission and distribution costs. The capital cost forms about 75% of the UEC (cost/KWh) and gets adversely affected by time over-runs of construction period and resultant cost over-runs due to escalation in material and labour costs as well as the added interest on capital during construction. Similar investments and costs are involved in case of the other two commercially viable sources i.e. hydro and coal from which electricity is generated.

Global economic viability of nuclear power.

Worldwide experience of operating coal and nuclear power plants indicates, that nuclear power at locations distant from coal fields, scores over coal thermal power in most countries. The ratio of coal UEC to nuclear UEC ranges between one and two. This is because the higher initial capital cost of the nuclear power plants is offset by their lower fuelling costs during the plant life, resulting in lower UEC of generation. For example, the ratio of coal and nuclear electricity generation costs in Germany is 2.02, in France 1.80, in U.K. 1.40 and in Japan 1.37.

Economic performance and prospects of Indian nuclear power plants.

The *capital cost* in terms of constant money (1987) in Rupees per Kilo-Watt has gradually reduced from Rs.10012 for RAPS-1 to Rs.5747 for MAPS-2. It increased to Rs.8083 at NAPP due to marked changes in design. The average arrived at for earlier stations is Rs.7093. For new stations under construction, it is Rs.11301 for KAPP-1&2, Rs.9048 for RAPP-3&4 and Rs.11545 for TAPP-3&4 (cost escalation at 7% per year). The average capital cost in Rupees per Mega Watt is about 2 crores for hydro, 1.5 crores for thermal and 2 crores for nuclear.



Madras Atomic Power Station

TYPICAL UNIT ENERGY COSTS (UEC) OF GENERATION FOR SOME OPERATING POWER STATIONS (Paise/KWh)-1989

Nuclear		Coal		Hydro	
TAPS	43.47	Korba (Pit-head)	40.52	Bairasiul	32.94
		Wanakbori	63.66		
RAPS	44.48	Singrauli (Pit-head)	40.46	Loktak	54.27
		Kota (1986-87)	76.05		
MAPS	50.82	Neyveli (Pit-head)	53.00	Salal-1	48.76
		Tuticorin	61.55		

The UECs for different energy sources indicated above are for perspective only. Not to prove economic superiority of any one source over the other. Electricity is an essential input to agriculture, industry, transportation and societal needs. It is more important to generate sufficient electrical energy to achieve and maintain national development and economy. In the ultimate analysis, as Dr. H.J. Bhabha so aptly put it, "No power is costlier than no power."

The *Unit Energy Cost (UEC)* of generation includes interest during construction, depreciation based on 25-year plant life, 12% returns on capital, O&M expenditure, fuelling cost and levies towards heavy water lease and make-up and decommissioning. The cost of waste management at the plant site is included in the capital and O&M costs. However, the costs of reprocessing and high level waste disposal are not included, as it is estimated that plutonium credit from the reprocessed spent fuel will more than offset these costs.

The immediate imperatives to improving the economics of nuclear power are reduction of project construction periods from 9-14 years to 6-8 years; raising power station capacity factors to 70-75% and reducing heavy water losses. Shorter construction periods are already being achieved, by standardising the nuclear power plant design from Narora onwards to all subsequent projects; by procuring in advance, long delivery key equipment like calandria and end-shields and by using high capacity cranes for erection of equipment from Kakrapar onwards. Towards improving capacity factors and reducing heavy water losses efforts are continuously being made through detailed system studies and through remedial action. Economically, nuclear power is seen to be viable and quite comparable to power from coal, specially at locations about 800 km away from coal fields.

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GUJARAT

Dangerous Stakes

The big money Vishi racket causes social havoc

IT is a vulgarised version of the chit funds. And the money, the type of people involved, and the violence unleashed are transforming Rajkot, the peaceful little town known for groundnut oil, into a gangster's haven.

The money game is known as Vishi for it normally involves 20 (*vis* in Gujarati) players. It works like a kitty. A group of, say, 20 people get together and decide to pool in Rs 20,000 each every month. This amount—Rs 4 lakh in this case—is then put on auction. The members bid for the kitty and the one willing to give up the highest chunk of the total clinches it. Supposing the winner settles for Rs 3.5 lakh, the remaining Rs 50,000 is distributed as profit among all the members. And the cycle carries on, with each member continuing to contribute Rs 20,000 every month. Only next time the winner is barred from bidding.

The trouble starts when a member refuses to pay instalments after winning the Vishi—a common occurrence among the less affluent who are exposed to sudden wealth. Often, the other members also refuse to pay up. The organiser then lets loose his goondas on the truant members.

The resulting mayhem has left residents of Rajkot shaken and fearful of the eventual toll the "Vishi menace" will leave behind. The police estimate that as much as one-fifth of the six lakh population in the town is involved in this racket. At least 10 people have committed suicide due to financial problems caused by Vishi. Says Sub-Inspector S. Chudasma, who is in charge of the squad probing Vishi cases: "People in Rajkot must have lost nearly Rs 100 crore in Vishi business this year."

Despite the police crack-down, the disease only shows signs of spreading. The greater havoc is the social and psychological repercussions. Many players became millionaires overnight, but came crashing down to earth just as suddenly. Rakesh Patel, (not his real name) 30, was a *paanwallah* when he got into the Vishi racket in 1988. The monthly collection of the dozen-odd Vishis he floated came to about Rs 1 crore. Within a year he had two chauffeur-driven Maruti cars and property worth lakhs. For his marriage early this year he bought crackers worth Rs 1 lakh.

But like the fire-crackers, his life too has gone up in smoke. Patel's case followed a familiar pattern. According to the police, he had swindled Rs 80 lakh from his clients. The victims hired gangsters to get it back. Rakesh was twice kidnapped and severely beaten up. And when the kidnappers threatened to kill him he agreed to transfer all his property and his two cars to the people he had swindled. Today he is back on the footpath.

Pradip Parmar, 29, did not live to tell his tale. Goondas started harassing him after he owed Rs 10 lakh to some Vishi members. Unable to pay up, he committed suicide leaving behind his wife and two children. Says his father Maganbhai: "I used to tell Pradip that his lust for easy money would land him in trouble. But he didn't heed my advice."

Ashwin Bhagat, a goldsmith, who also lost out in the Vishi racket had to sell his ancestral property worth Rs 7 lakh. "That I am no debtor now is my only consolation," he says.

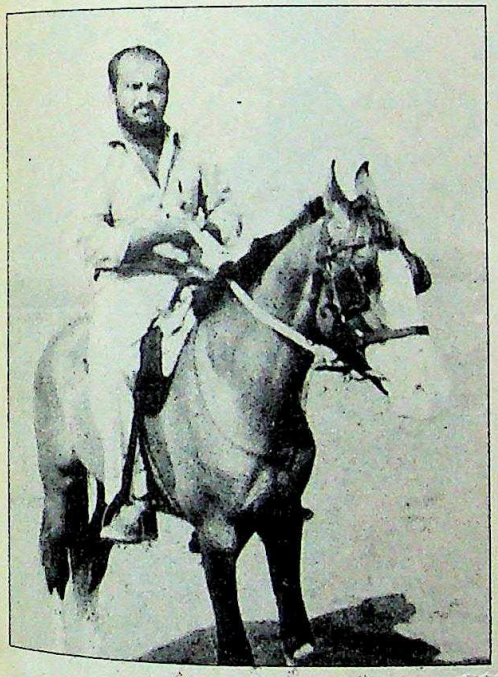
With criminals ruling Rajkot, and the police also suspected to be hand in glove with the major operators, it is no wonder that musclemen from the notorious Mer community of Porbander have started moving into Rajkot. For the nervous residents, that is another sign that the Vishi monster is just beginning to show its fangs.

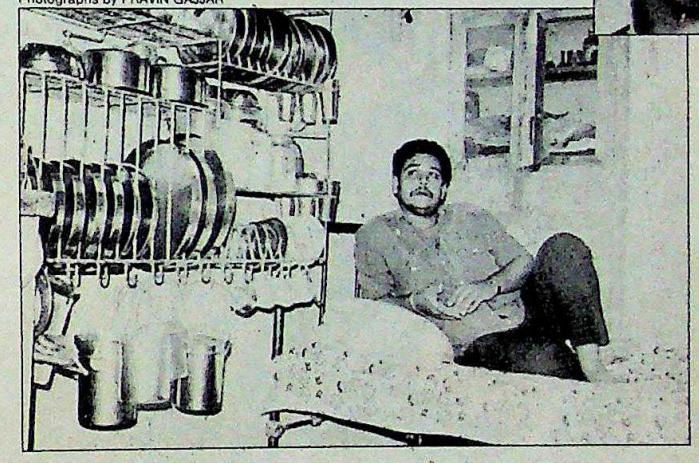
—UDAY MAHURKAR



Parmar (below left) and Jayanthibhai (inset) who committed suicide; Bhagat: grim scene

Photographs by PRAVIN GAJJAR

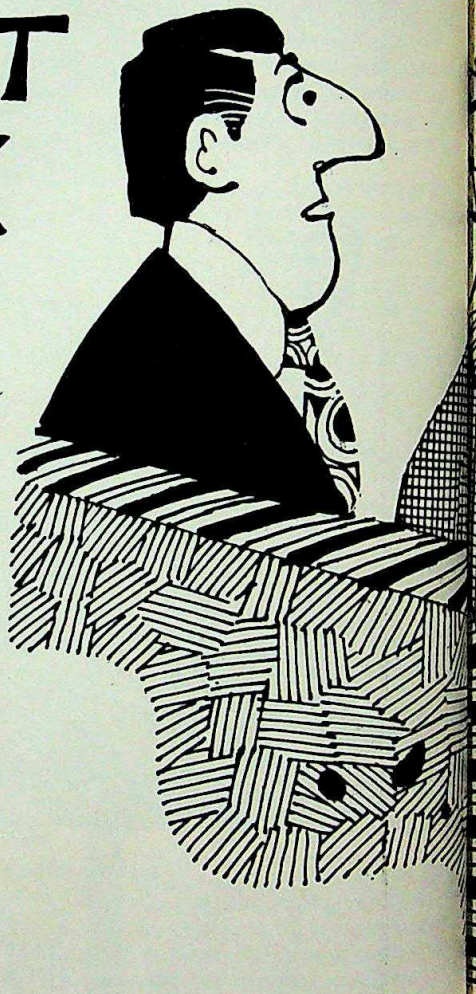


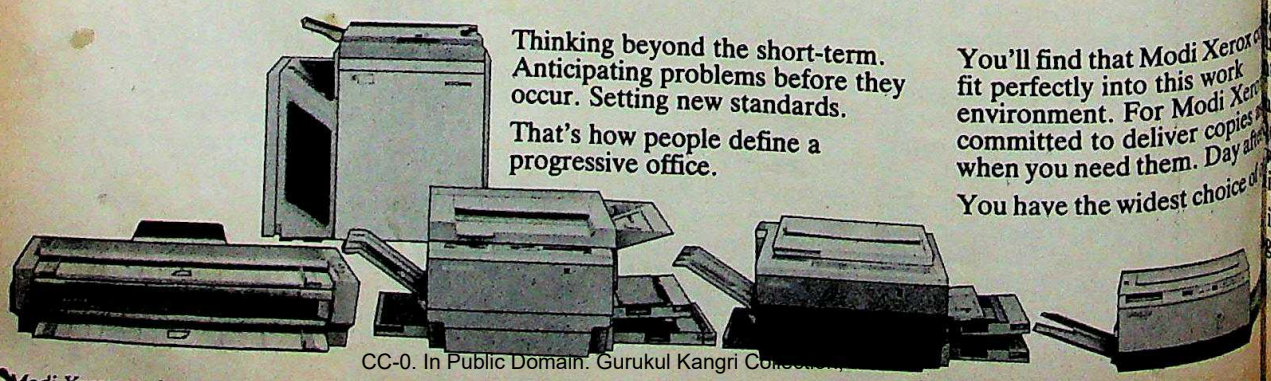


The Vishi racket which has resulted in 10 suicides and left many paupers, has badly shaken the residents of Rajkot.

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My Heart Bleeds for Me



WITH the spread of the psychological sensibility, many of us have acquired a greater appreciation of the role of passions, sexual and violent, in influencing our behaviour. Sex, for instance, can be fraught with anxiety, but it is no longer taboo. In contrast, another great motivator of human behaviour, self-love or narcissism, is still viewed with much misgiving. A person who is a victim of his passion may be pitied and even seen by some as a tragic hero. A man propelled by self-love, on the other hand, is invariably scorned as mean and contemptible. Whereas the perversions of sex may evoke sympathy, the miscarriages of self-love, such as a smug superiority or an arrogant self-righteousness, provoke distaste even among the most tolerant.

The denial of our sexual nature is expressed in cant about purity and asceticism. The denial of narcissism, on the other hand, is often couched in the rhetoric of its opposite, altruism or the love of fellow man. And its preachers infest many spheres of public life.

Whereas we may be in the process of developing an ear for the cant around sexuality, we are still far from having a nose for the hypocrisy which envelops self-love and self-promotion. The rhetoric of altruism continues to beguile most of us, successfully camouflaging its characteristic smell of the waste material which comes out of the rear end of a bull. Yet, in many ways, an unawareness of the workings of self-love is more dangerous than an ignorance of our sexual and violent nature. The latter normally leads to private tragedies, the former often to public disasters.

Politicians, of course, are the most visible purveyors of both bull and its manure. We love to hate them because they are the most acceptable containers of our impulses toward selfishness, arrogance and self-aggrandisement. Projecting our own troubling narcissism onto them leaves us feeling virtuous. We need our politicians to be transparent rogues whose professions of public service sometimes luckily coincide with their private purposes of self-promotion. Indeed, it would disturb the psychological balance between us and our political leaders—we, only altruistic; they, cheerfully narcissistic—if we felt that politicians truly believed their own rhetoric.

Illustration by JAYANTO



Unawareness of self-love leads to public disasters and is more dangerous than an ignorance of our sexual and violent nature.

The disquiet about V.P. Singh's Mandal performance is not that he purveys an idealistic egalitarianism whereas his real object is self-promotion; that is expected of a politician and thus acceptable. The sense of disquiet may well be due to the apprehension that he actually believes what he says, that he may be really unaware of his motives of self-interest. For it is out of disavowal of one's narcissism, the denial of a large part of our human reality, that messianic leaders are born and national disasters made.

Even when rightly suspicious of politicians, we are not sufficiently wary of the altruistic postures struck in other fields of human endeavour such as business, journalism, academia and the judiciary. With politicians, we have made a compact of simple delegation: we will let them be self-serving on our behalf. With the other occupiers of the moral high ground, however, we have entered into a collusion: let us fortify each other's altruism. Such false notes as environmentalists cosying up with international agencies in Goan beach resorts, conferences on eradication of poverty taking place in elegant Italian villas, extollers of egalitarianism sending their children to exclusive schools, are not quite as readily registered in our consciousness as the contradictions apparent in the poor politician.

When a high-profile academic colleague tells me that he is going to a seminar in Rome only to earn a fee that will enable him to impart his wisdom to a small college in Kerala—the road to Kozhikode leading via Rome—it takes a little while before the whiff from the bull's hindquarters reaches my nostrils. Most of our new preachers lack the self-awareness and the *savoir-faire* of the leftist French mayor who, on being reproached for his taste for high living, replied: "I am a socialist, not an idiot."

This does not mean that I am extolling narcissism and its products such as the free market economy. I am only pointing to the pervasive presence of narcissism in human affairs and arguing that, however compelling the siren song of altruism may be, the denial of self-love can be dangerous to both the individual and society. When carried along by the full flow of altruism, it may be salutary for both private individuals and public figures not only to ask of themselves the question: "For whom does the heart bleed?" but also to answer with rueful honesty, "Well, actually, mostly it bleeds for me."

The author is a well-known psychoanalyst.

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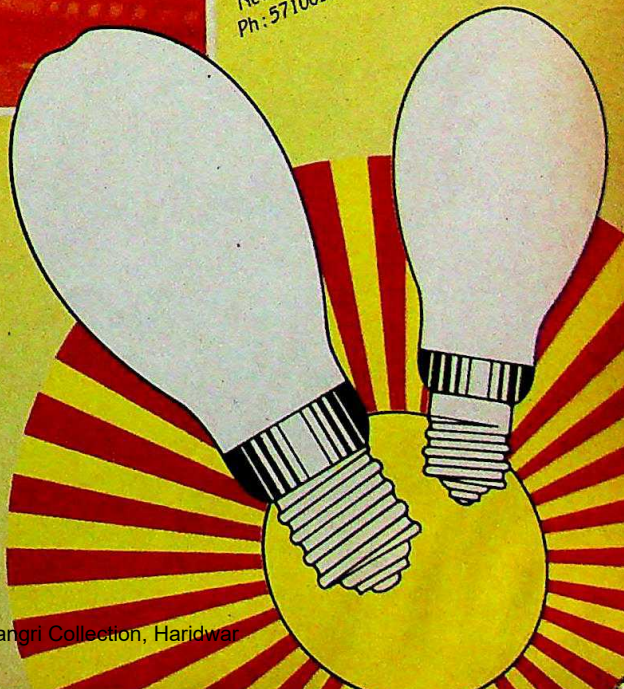
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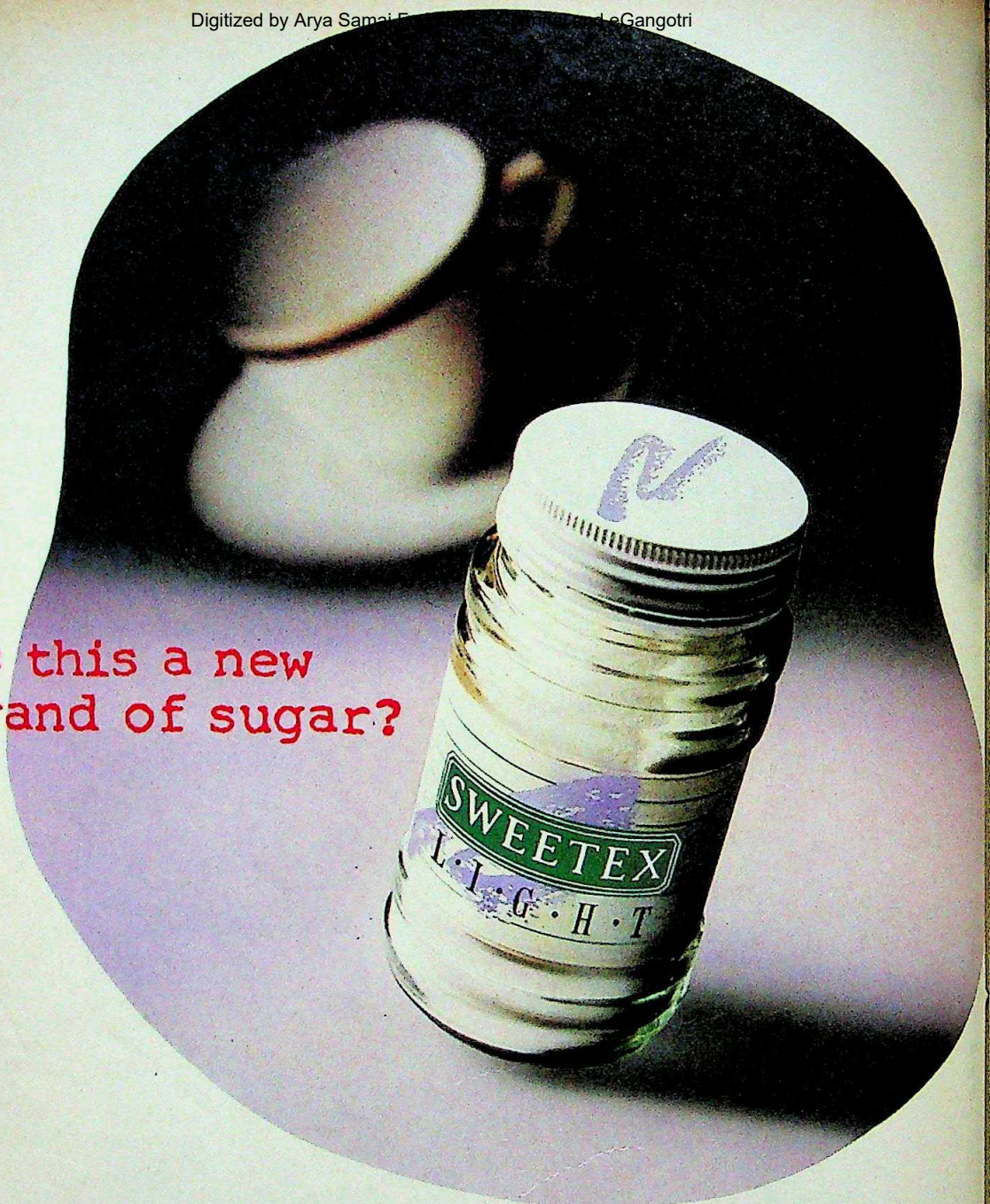
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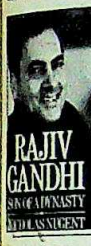
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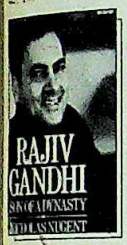
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A sympathetic biography which charts old territory

RAJIV GANDHI:
SON OF A DYNASTY
by NICHOLAS NUGENT
BBC Books
Price: £15.95; Pages: 223



LIKE Coca Cola, things suddenly seem to be going better for Rajiv Gandhi. With the present Government poised to self-destruct, his political fortunes have registered a correspondingly sharp upswing. Even more heartening for Rajiv is the impressive turnout for his whistle-stop *yatra*, ending, with delicious symbolism, on the very day that the confrontation between the BJP and V.P. Singh's tottering government came to a head. And now comes a lavish and subtly sympathetic biography bearing the authentic stamp of the BBC, no less.

The author, Nicholas Nugent, has undoubtedly impressive credentials: He has spent considerable time in India reporting for the BBC World Service where he is currently senior commentator on South Asian affairs. Nugent's literary affair with Rajiv Gandhi contains more empathetic parallels. He taught for a while at Doon School, Rajiv's much-loved Alma Mater. He also studied at Cambridge around the time Rajiv was there and is an avid amateur pilot to boot. As a foreign journalist in India, Nugent understandably related to Rajiv's yuppie image and his seemingly modern and liberal outlook. That much is obvious from the general tone of the book—objective on the whole about Rajiv's failures but unable to resist a subtle sympathy with the subject.

The problem with tackling a biography on Rajiv is that his lineage, youth and outwardly attractive personality resulted in something of a literary overkill. So much has already been written about him that it is difficult to find anything startlingly new to say. Nugent had the advantage of prolonged personal access to Rajiv which, however, can often prove self-defeating. Rajiv's legendary charm in one-on-one encounters, specially with someone who shares much in common, makes it even more difficult to unravel the analytical enigma that Rajiv still is to many of his own countrymen, let alone a foreigner.

Nugent perhaps realised the limitations involved which is why his effort is clearly aimed at a foreign market where Rajiv's media exposure was just enough to excite latent curiosity. For Indian readers, there is not much in the book that covers new ground or probes any deeper in explaining why the Rajiv magic failed to work.

As a biographical subject, however, Rajiv is ideal material. His life has been something of a political fairy-tale for the most part. Born into India's first family, exposed to a steady stream of world figures, an exclusive education, good looks, marriage to an attractive Italian ("his first and only girl-friend" as Nugent discloses) and finally, the reluctant prince ascending the throne so tragically vacated by his martyred mother. In other words, a near-perfect literary springboard except for the fact that Nugent's effort makes a splash without creating any new ripples.

He does, along the way, clear up some issues of debate. The decision to induct Rajiv as prime minister immediately after Mrs Gandhi's assassination, Nugent says, was Zail Singh's alone. He quotes the former President as saying that he had decided to swear in Rajiv on the flight back to Delhi from Yemen. ("Even if the Congress(I) Parliamentary Board had proposed Rajiv's name it was not binding on me. The choice of Rajiv Gandhi was mine and mine alone. Nobody else contributed.") Zail revealed his choice to R.K. Dhawan and Arun Nehru in the car taking him from the airport to the hospital where Mrs Gandhi's body lay and says that "Dhawan looked happy while Arun Nehru remained silent". If Nugent's version is to be believed then, Arun Nehru's image as king-maker takes another beating.

Nugent also adds some untold Cambridge episodes, the most apocryphal being the remark Rajiv's tutor made when he asked the new undergraduate the meaning of the lamp emblem on his Doon School blazer. On being told it represented the lamp of learning, the tutor reportedly replied: "What a pity they didn't light it while you were still there."

Post-prime ministerial revelations include



Rajiv being sworn in as prime minister

EXCERPT

Shortly before midnight, Rajiv made his first address to the nation... It was hastily cobbled together with the help of a number of key aides. They included Arun Nehru, R.K. Dhawan and Sharada Prasad. Sonia Gandhi, and two of Rajiv's close friends, Arun Singh and Amitabh Bachchan were there too. One of the team sent to record the address recalls helping Bachchan to translate the text from English into Hindi. She was told to write in big bold letters so that the prime minister could easily read it; English is the first language of Rajiv, as indeed it continues to be the main language of government. The English version of his address was recorded without difficulty, but when the time came to record the Hindi version, Rajiv stuttered and fluffed. There were several retakes. 'He sounded very uncomfortable with the language,' recalls the producer.

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similar nuggets of irrelevant information—that Rajiv was one of the first Indians to have a Sony Walkman compact disc player and even had one installed in his bullet-proof Range Rover. And, that he became an enthusiastic 'Ham' operator, frequently conversing with amateur radio freaks around the world on his Japanese-made Yaesu transmitter.

On Rajiv's political career, the analysis is, however, a little thin on the ground. Or rather, there is too much well-trodden ground that must necessarily be covered for the book to retain any element of freshness. The conclusions he draws about Rajiv's failures—an obstinate bureaucracy, the obstructive Old Guard in the Congress, his own inability to push through the things he wanted done, the coterie of advisers, and of course, the scandals—offer very little that is new.

In the end, however, Nugent puts the major blame for Rajiv's failure on his mother. "She was perhaps his worst enemy. She had determined on dynastic succession, drafted him in as her heir and yet failed to equip him fully for the task that was entrusted to him when she died." That is a conclusion that is difficult to debate but it is still not enough.

Rajiv's failures lay in himself and the compromises he was all-too-easily forced into making. The real enigma exists in the evolution of his complexity, the kind of split-personality he became for the latter half of his reign. To portray him as a simple, well-meaning, modern young man foiled by the forces of darkness—as Nugent eventually does—is taking the easy way out.

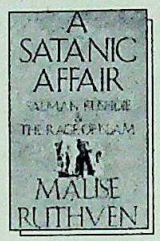
What the book does emphasise, albeit unintentionally, is one of the greatest ironies of modern Indian political history. Namely, what a truly formidable team Rajiv Gandhi and V.P. Singh made when they were together, one as a fairy-tale prime minister, the other as the incorruptible keeper of the country's moral conscience. Rajiv's disclosure to Nugent about his parting of ways with V.P. Singh is characteristically obtuse: "He thought I was dumping him from Finance but I needed someone good in Defence."

It is precisely that flippant, somewhat naive attitude, which turned Rajiv into an irritating enigma. And, if the most persistent question being asked today is whether or not Rajiv Gandhi is capable of changing his spots, there are no answers to be found in *Son of a Dynasty*. —DILIP BOBB

Casting Light

Rushdie controversy studied

A SATANIC AFFAIR:
Salman Rushdie & the Rage of Islam
by MALISE RUTHVEN
Chatto & Windus, London
Price: Rs 491; Pages: 184



A year and a half after the uproar over *Satanic Verses*, the European Community—Britain included—has chosen to restore relations with Iran, although Iran has given no indication of revoking the *fatwa* against Salman Rushdie. Realpolitik, it seems, has triumphed again. However, the memories of those days remain: the heated debates, the ill-informed commentary, Rushdie's own haughtiness, racist attacks on Islam, frenzied book-burning, Khomeini's *fatwa*, diplomatic stand-offs and, finally, Rushdie's involuntary incarceration.

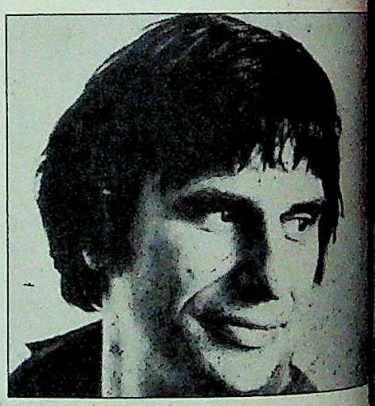
Was it yet another conflict between reason and faith? Was Rushdie a secular first-amendment fundamentalist, speaking a language of doubt which a culture conditioned to equate doubt with apostasy was unable to digest? It is questions such as these that Malise Ruthven attempts to answer with this impressive account.

An eminent British journalist, who's presently a visiting professor at Dartmouth College in the US, Ruthven has the necessary pedigree: Eton and Cambridge, the Middle East Centre in Lebanon, relief work in Jordan, a long-ish stint with BBC's Arabic services and two books (including the authoritative *Islam in the World*) under his belt. He looks at Islam's fury with empathy. Moreover, he goes "to listen" to British Muslims offended by the book, irrespective of their having actually read it (most hadn't). Ruthven's sympathy and admiration for Rushdie are transparent. But then so are his objectivity and knowledge.

The book is neither racy, popular journalism nor an esoteric academic exercise. It is valuable because it throws light instead of generating heat. One example: Ruthven points out that even according to the Qur'an, the *fatwa* cannot be implemented, since the Islamic laws of blasphemy apply only to Muslim lands. Two, he skilfully demonstrates that the sense of honour and shame *(izzat)* in Islam are so deep-rooted that what Rushdie has written—its literary merit apart—is more than enough to incite the devout. "The protest," he observes, "has more to do with honour than faith." Three, he highlights the fierce internecine warfare among British Muslim groups—Barelwis, Maududis, Jamaatis and Deobandis—which prompts each faction to be even more strident than the other, leading a pro-Iranian leader, Kalim Siddiqui, to seek an Islamic nation in Britain.

Ruthven concludes by coming down strongly on Rushdie's side on every issue except one: his judgement. For an author of Rushdie's calibre

Ruthven: informed and objective



who claimed to know the subconscious nental psyche so well; to have failed to foresee the storm is incredible. Since Rushdie refused to be interviewed for the book, Ruthven can, at best, make informed guesses about the reasons for the failure.

The ultimate question is whether Rushdie knew what he was doing—or he, as many devout Muslims feel, a vulgar vandal offending their deepest feelings? Or is he, as Ruthven asks, a solitary crusader against the dragons of bigotry? Or is his a case of hubris of a gifted artiste flying too close to the sun of his inspiration?

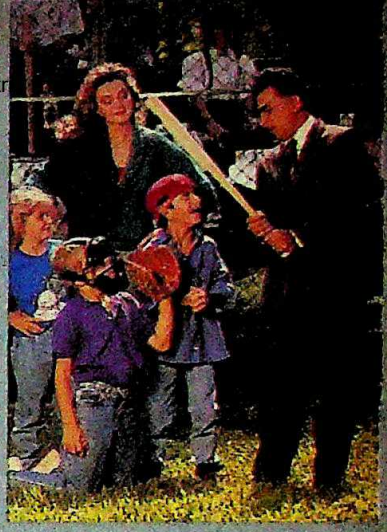
The Rushdie controversy raises issues that went far beyond "freedom of expression" and "honour of the Prophet". This book elevates the debate from shrill denunciations to informed inquiry. But it just might appear heretical in cultures not used to questioning authority.

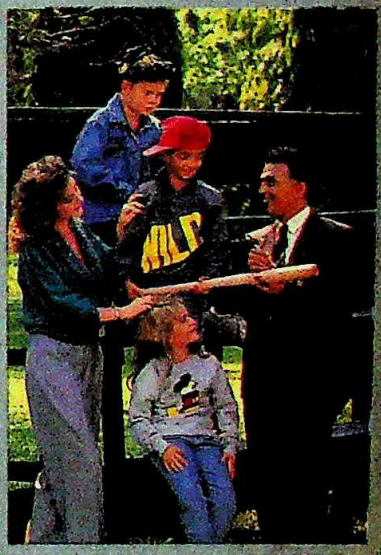
—SALIL TRIPA

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HI-COMFORT WOOL

dinesh

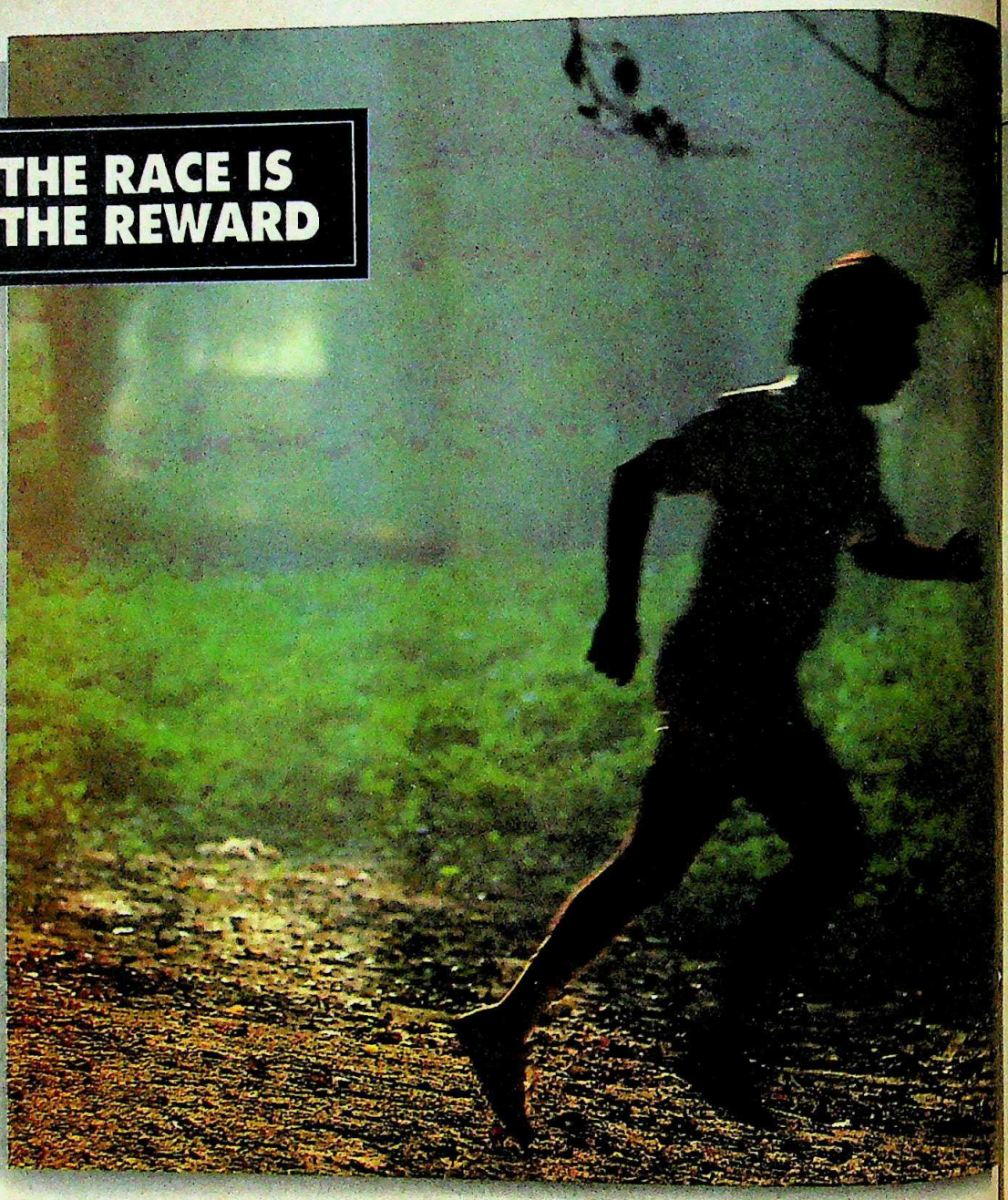
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THE RACE IS THE REWARD



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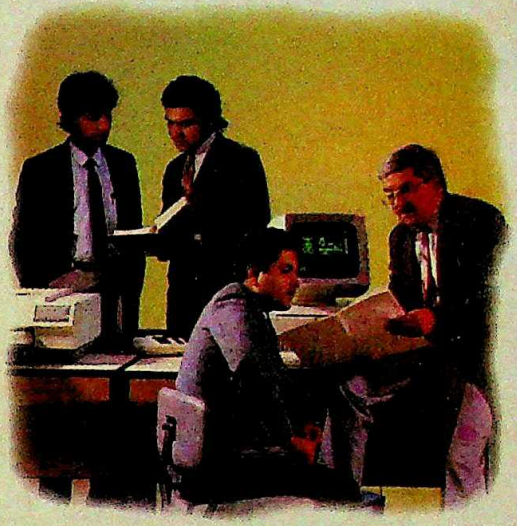
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SAEED BANGASH



Neeli: boudoir bomb

◆ *What did Salman Rushdie say to Pamella Bordes? Yours is a bed case but mine is verse.* After the jokes, the two controversial Indian exports to the UK are now being immortalised in the movies. Inspired by the huge success of *International Gourillay*—where he takes villain Rushdie head on—Pakistani film director Jamshed Naqvi is now all set to have an affair with Pam who shot to world fame with a bang. Pakistani actress, **Neeli**, will follow Pamella's wanderlust through many political boudoirs. "Pam has a lot to give to the big screen audience," Naqvi reportedly said. With a subject as volatile as this one, he may have one problem though: Pakistan's prudish censors who start ruthlessly chopping the minute the heroine starts dropping her clothes.

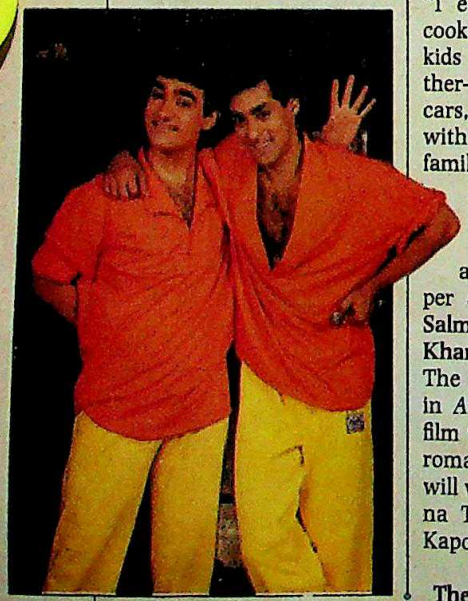
◆ The Malaysian Airlines Boeing 737 took off—by a hair's breadth. Literally. Last month at Kuala Lumpur airport, as hundreds watched, **R. Letchumanah**, 40, an Indian settled in Malaysia, tied the aircraft to his hair and pulled the 32.5 tonne machine for several metres. That beats his own *Guinness Book* record for towing a six tonne bus with 25 passengers on board—with his hair. Malaysia's mighty man refuses to disclose his secret. "I eat whatever my wife cooks," he says. His young kids are learning from father——they tow around cars, not with their hair but with their teeth. Clearly a family with a lot of pull.

P. ATHITHAN



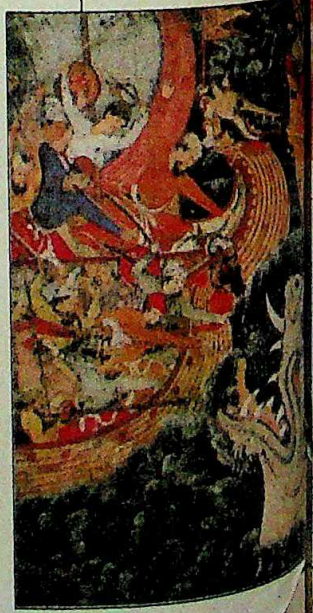
Letchumanah: hair power

◆ It's enough to give any gum chewing, acne-ridden, teenie-bopper a major heart attack: **Salman Khan** and **Aamir Khan** together in one film. The two rivals will star in *Andaz Apna Apna*, a fun film that harks back to the romance of yore. The Khans will woo newcomers Raveena Tandon and Karishma Kapoor, "all blossoming flowers," says director Rajkumar Santoshi. Salman and Aamir—who in the past have set many young hormones raging—are excited. "The combination is too appealing to resist," says Aamir while Salman says: "This film is bound to go into history as an evergreen."



The Khans: debonair duo

◆ The telephone rang continuously. The price rose. And rose. And rose. The audience sat in tense silence at Christie's auction of rare Indian art in New York while three telephone bidders vied to outbid each other. The hammer finally came down on **Dastan-i-Amir Hamza**—at an incredible $462,000 (Rs 78,54,000), creating a new world record for an Indian painting. The previous record was set in March this year at $110,000. Even though many rare Indian pieces went abegging at Christie's, *Hamza-Nama*, a 16th century work, unpredictably went shooting up in value. "It was of very exceptional quality," explained Christie spokesperson Sarah Kinney. The prized painting is now the property of the famous London art dealer, Spink and Co.



Dastan-i-Amir-Hamza: record sale



Nachappa: cast anew

◆ **Ashwini Nachappa**, thief who learned to run only to avoid getting cau... The glamorous track s... 23, could sue, if she wa... part of the deal herself. M... baron Ramoji Rao of *Ee*... snapped up the speed q... for a film based on her l... with a little masala adde... Ashwini plays *Aswin*... gutsy slum girl who mak... to top-flight athletics. ... on her way up between ... coaches—good and bad... feels good to be a star," ... an exuberant Ashwini... one man carries an umbr... to protect her from the ... while another holds a m... to that successful face.

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GREAT INDIAN SPIRIT

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NOVEMBER 30, 1990



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ARUN SHOURIE: WHY NON-CONGRESS GOVERNMENTS COLLAPSE

THE GOVERNMENT

HOW LONG WILL THE SMILES LAST?

Rajiv Gandhi
Congress(I) president

Chandra Shekhar
Prime Minister

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Chores, children, Chitrahaar: the mind can conjure up a hundred inventive excuses to keep you snug in your slothful state.

Getting started can be the hardest part of exercising.

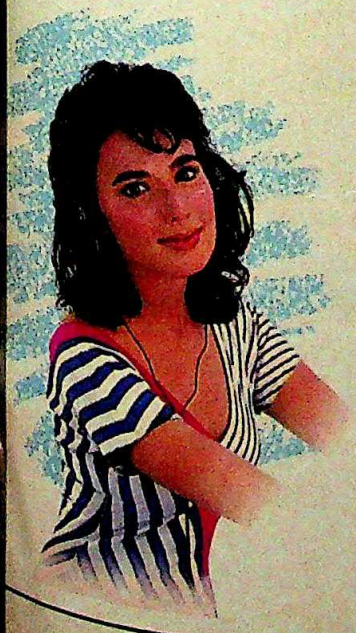
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Tactical Moves

Health habits usually require a little planning: after all, that's the difference between equal combat and a suicide mission.

It's a matter of discovering an exercise activity that slips naturally into your routine. Something that can develop into a regular habit.

You may find, for instance, that a home workout machine such as the Hero *Allegro (see box)* is a practical solution, since it's both *convenient* and *accessible.*



Survival Skills

Once you're actually in the fray, you'll need all the survival skills you can acquire to keep you going.

- *Try a little inspiration.* It's a test of will you're letting yourself in for, and you won't reach anywhere without motivation. Buy yourself a tight pair of jeans and work towards the day you'll be able to fit into them.
- *Go step by step and you'll go further.* That means working out an exercise program with long-term goals as well as realistic short-term ones. With a workout machine you can keep tabs on your progress, measuring time and effort put in.
- *Keep your exercise equipment in full view.* Slipping out of a routine is harder that way. Put it in your bedroom so it's the first thing you see in the morning.
- *Make it a habit.* If there's a favourite TV program you don't miss, exercise on your workout machine while you watch it.
- *Make it fun.* If you don't enjoy what you're doing, you'll give up easily. Chase away the workout blues by strapping on a Walkman. Or working out to video.

And now that you're armed completely, get ready for the action. After all, what do you stand to lose besides a few inches?



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And as you grow fitter, step up the pace by adjusting time and tension controls.
Choose the Hero *Allegro*. And get fighting fit.

HERO Allegro

The complete workout machine.

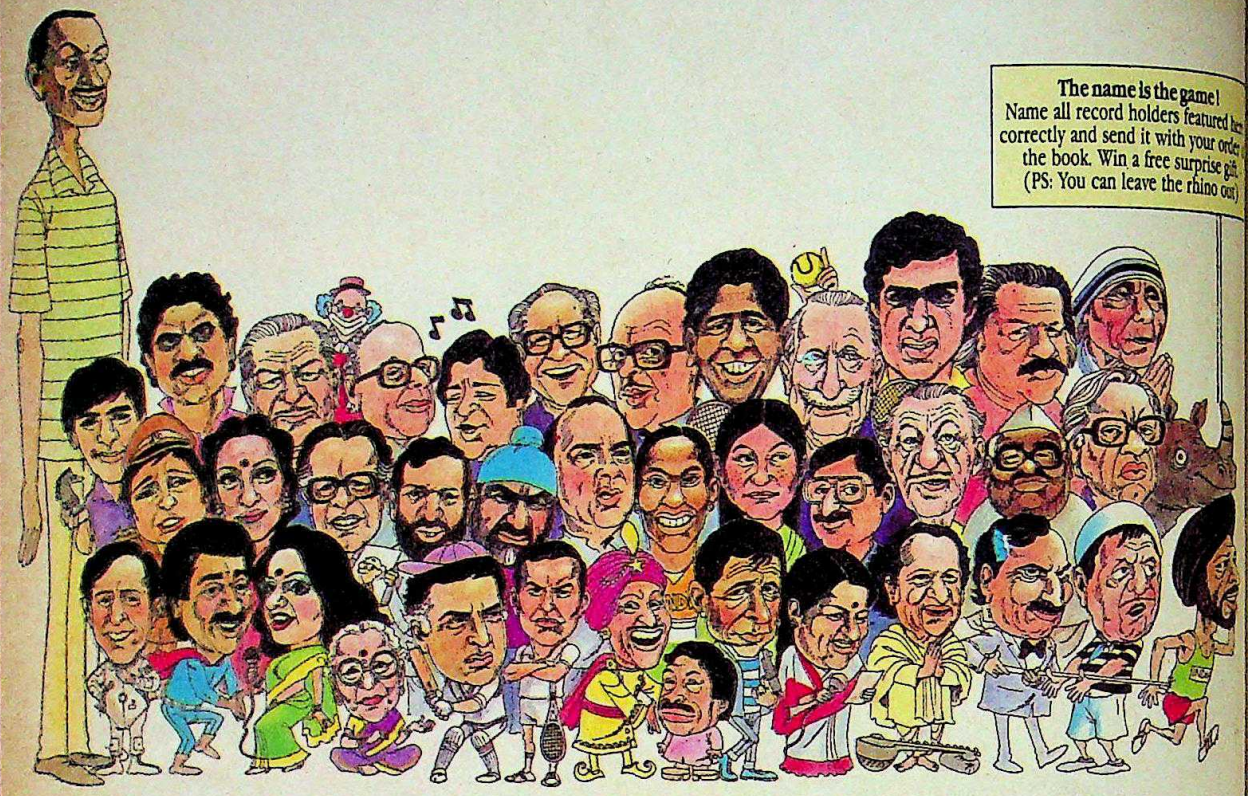
The Hero Allegro is available at leading sports shops and Hero Cycle dealerships. For further information, contact: Hero Cycles Ltd., Hero Nagar, G.T. Road, Ludhiana-141 003

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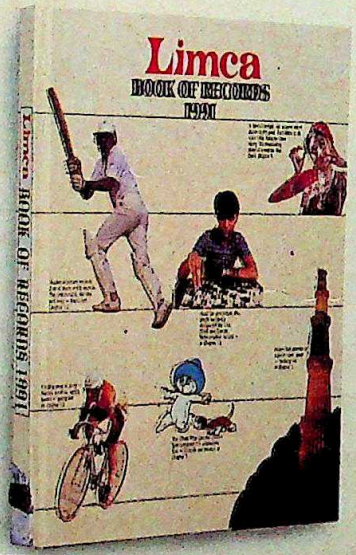
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PLAYING WITH FIRE

It is unfortunate that even as V.P. Singh has laid the foundation for a caste war ("Drawing the Battlelines", November 15) by accepting the Mandal report, the BJP and the Muslim fundamentalists are fanning communal sentiments by taking extreme stands on the mandir-masjid issue. Clearly, politicians have a very myopic perspective determined by political compulsions.

Hyderabad — HAJI SHER KHAN

■ The BJP is responsible for the communal hysteria that has gripped the country. If it is the only 'secular' party, as it claims, it should have no objection to the disputed site being converted into a national monument or remaining a mosque.

New Delhi — YOGINDER SIKAND

■ If both the Hindus and the Muslims want to solve the Ayodhya issue then the Hindus should give up their demand of constructing a temple on the disputed land and the Muslims should agree to shifting the mosque to another place. Instead, a charitable institution sponsored by all religious communities should be built on the disputed site.

Mangalore — MARIO D'SOUZA

A FATAL STEP

Your article ("Pyres of Protest", October 31) on the aftermath of the Mandal Commission report almost pushed me to consider self-immolation. However, after I read the letter from the editor, I thought things over and decided against it. I have to confess though that if I considered suicide, it was not due to any anti-Mandal sentiments but entirely out of personal frustration.

Calcutta — SANDEEP BHATTACHARYA

■ In his speeches V.P. Singh has emphatically said that if he were to choose between the heart and the mind, he'd go for the heart. But considering how unaffected he has been by the spate of self-immolations and violence, it seems like he doesn't have a heart at all.

Secunderabad — GUNJAN PANT

■ If the Government does enforce the Mandal report on the unwilling masses, then the only way out is non-cooperation. Just as the freedom fighters got rid of the British, today we can get rid of the enemies of the country—V.P. Singh, Ram Vilas Paswan and Sharad Yadav—through non-cooperation.

New Delhi — JANAKI MENON

■ Using psychologists to analyse the trend of suicide by self-immolation is wrong for the issue is more emotional than scientific. Psychologists cannot even begin to understand the frustrations of students.

Nasik — RAJIV SHASTRI

■ V.P. Singh's parents must be feeling sorry they named him Vishwanath. Perhaps, Vishwanash would have been more appropriate.

London — SHILPA SAMANT

■ The wide display given to self-immolations through photographs and editorials only glorifies the act and gives impetus to a movement that is, in fact, harmful to the larger national interest.

Nagpur — SONIA BELE

■ The press seems to have given a much clearer picture of self-immolations than Doordarshan. While the print media has been responsible, Doordarshan has merely presented the Government's point of view.

Bangalore — S.S.S. DALVI

UNFAIR DIG

Former army chief, General V.N. Sharma's statement ("Quelling Sordid Affairs", October 31) justifying his anti-debauchery drive in the Indian Army, that "the code of conduct has to be maintained otherwise we'll become like the police force" was an unjustified dig at the police force. It also violated an honourable code of conduct that forbids needless criticism of one service by another service on unrelated matters.

New Delhi — R.K. KHANDELWAL

DIVIDING TO RULE

Prime Minister V.P. Singh's style of governance and his dismal failure to evolve a national consensus on issues (" Pulling Apart", October 31) like Ayodhya, Kashmir and Punjab have deprived his government of legitimacy. Moreover, his efforts to build his vote bank by pitting antagonistic groups against each other have led the country down the path of destruction.

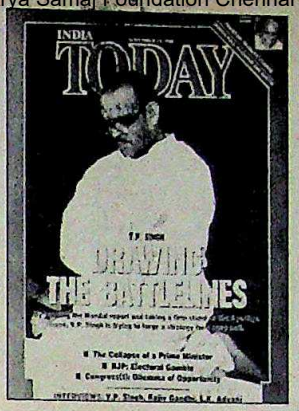
New Delhi — YESHWANT TRASI

■ The integrity of the nation is being destroyed as V.P. Singh divides the nation along caste lines, L.K. Advani tears the people along communal lines, Devi Lal builds the urban-rural divide and Mulayam Singh Yadav sunders the nation on the basis of language.

New Delhi — SUBIR VYAS

MISPLACED PRIORITIES

BJP chief L.K. Advani's Rath Yatra has been responsible for the loss of hundreds of



The cause of Hinduism will not be served by building a temple over the dead bodies of communal harmony and tolerance.

Patna — JAYA PRASAD

The storming of the Ram mandir has raised the threat of Hindus becoming second class citizens in a country where they form over 70 per cent of the population.

London — J.K. SAMANT

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lives ("Rumbustious Ride", October 31) and for plunging the country into a near civil war. In a short spell of time Advani's image has changed from that of a sober, intelligent leader to a communal one.

Patna — SYED SIBTE A. RIZVI

■ Whether or not there was any justification for L.K. Advani's Rath Yatra, it definitely diverted the Government's attention from matters more serious than building a temple. It seems the priorities of the leaders are misplaced. They should pay more attention to the upliftment of the poor rather than to vote-catching schemes.

Madras — S. RETNASWAMY

■ Those who are trying to paint the BJP as a communal party today seem to have forgotten that the Janata Dal's election symbol was a straight copy of the *kaalchakra* in the *Mahabharat*. Weren't they playing to Hindu sentiments then?

Patna — ARINDAM 'KUILTI'

SHAMEFUL SHOW

Our squad's miserable showing at the Beijing Asiad ("Debacle Diary", October 31) was matched only by the ridiculous behaviour of our officials. A solitary gold medal, that too in kabbadi, has probably been the poorest show in any Asiad so far. It seems like once sportspersons are assured of a place in the squad their interest wanes. Also, their training leaves much to be desired.

Bangalore — D.B.N. MURTHY

■ Though India participated in 27 events, it was able to win only one gold. If that isn't shameful enough, even the future of Indian sports appears bleak. Given the state of things, I suggest that the Indian Olympic Association be renamed the Architect of Indian Defeat.

Chandigarh — ANJU GUPTA

■ The poor performance of the Indian contingent has brought shame and humiliation to the country. Even smaller countries like Qatar, Iran, Indonesia have done better than us in the medal tally. The Sports Authority of India, which took the responsibility of preparing the Indian team for the Asiad, is to be blamed for the disaster.

Hyderabad — S.B.J. SINGH

After several centuries of exploitation, giving up 55,000 jobs seems like a fairly small price to ask of the higher castes.

New Delhi — VIVEK SINGH



The Government, though openly opposed to apartheid, does not hesitate to introduce discriminatory policies in India.

Pilani — SUDEEP JAIN

CONTENTIOUS ISSUE

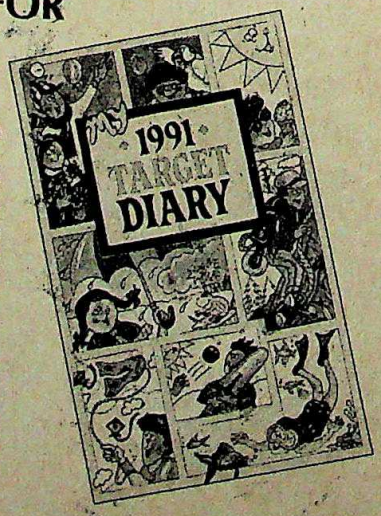
The Mandal Commission report has clearly triggered off unprecedented emotions. INDIA TODAY received a deluge of letters on the subject. Of the 163 received, 141 are against the Government's stand and a mere 22 support it.

Most respondents feel that the OBCs don't need reservations. They suggest free education, financial incentives and professional training. Most respondents backed reservation on economic criterion.

Some novel opinions include that of D.N. Mishra, Patna who wants reservations depending on the size of each family. J.S. Rathor of Churu, Rajasthan calls for a national referendum on the report.

Those favouring Mandal on the other hand lauded V.P. Singh for his selfless stand. They cited the success of reservations in south India. In fact, Dr S.R. Pasha writing from Riyadh stresses that admission alone does not guarantee a degree.

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when provoked. You're glad
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you want the world's
best – no matter where in the
world it comes from.
You fully approve Skybags'
specially imported zip.

You believe in subtle
yet lasting bonds.
Strong, trusted alliances
that stand up
beautifully to the tests
of time. You secretly
admire the unyielding
stitching of Skybags.

You can't resist picking
up something artistic even if
it reminds you
of the books you haven't
yet sat down to write.

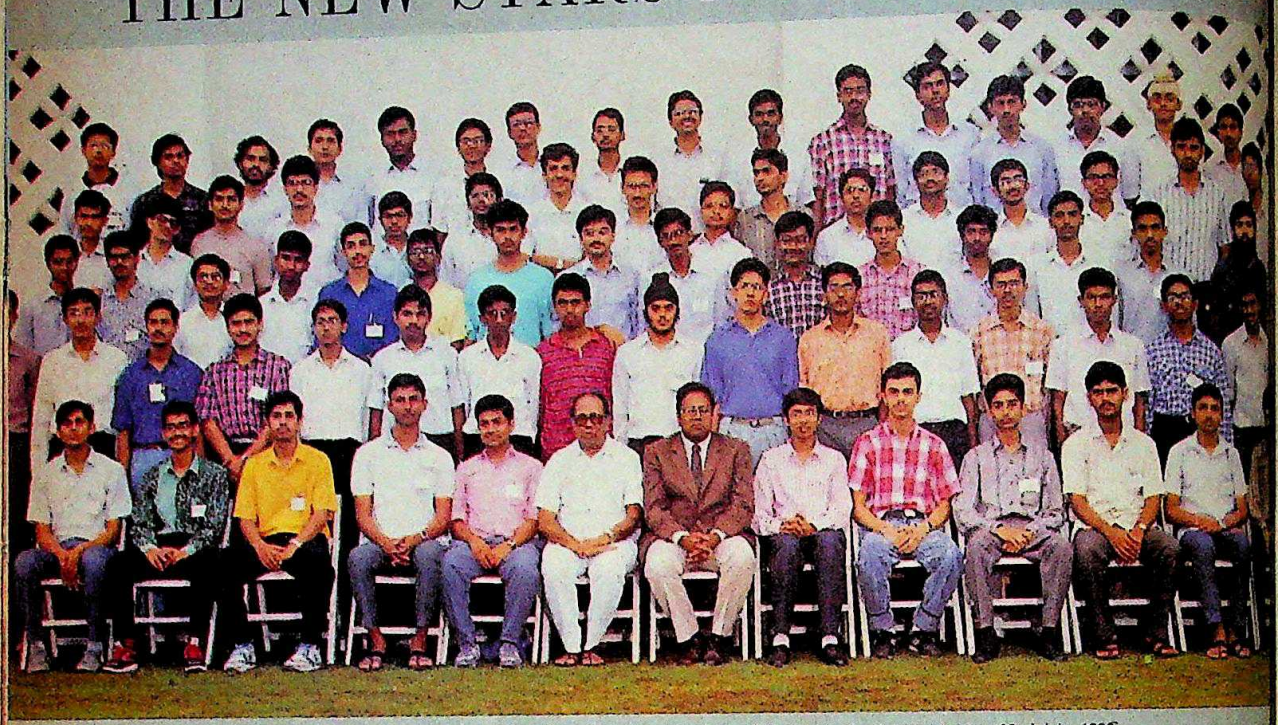
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THE NEW STARS IN OUR GALAXY.



Principal G D Agrawal with our IIT JEE 1990 toppers, at the 36th Annual Prize Distribution function held on 22nd July, 1990.

Sitting (Left to Right)

Ashish Goel	*Lucknow*	**1st**
Alok Mittal	*New Delhi*	**2nd**
Gagan Hasteer	*New Delhi*	**3rd**
Balaji Sampath	*Madras*	**4th**
Sanjay Verma	*Lucknow*	**5th**
G D Agrawal (Principal)		
P.G. Agrawal (Director)		
Pradyul R. Shah	*Bombay*	**6th**
Amit Y Ganesh	*Bombay*	**7th**
Nishant Mittal	*Kota*	**8th**
Ranen Chatterjee	*Durgapur*	**9th**
Ravi Murthy	*Bangalore*	**12th**
Om Prakash Damani	*Calcutta*	**15th**

Standing (1st Row)

K V S Rajeev	*Hyderabad*	**68th**
Pranab G Sen	*Bombay*	**16th**
Prashant Gupta	*Kota*	**17th**
Prithvi Prabhu	*Madras*	**18th**
Alok Agrawal	*Jaipur*	**20th**
Mukesh Chandra Sahu	*Asansol*	**21st**
Nandyala Harish	*Secunderabad*	**22nd**
B Prakash	*Bangalore*	**23rd**
Rajdeep Ghai	*New Delhi*	**26th**
Amit M Khivesara	*Bombay*	**28th**
S R B Ramanujam	*Madras*	**29th**
J Mahesh	*Calcutta*	**30th**
Anand Srinivasan	*Madras*	**31st**
Vijay Nandanwar	*Bhilai*	**32nd**
B Rajeev	*Secunderabad*	**33rd**
S Viswanath	*Bangalore*	**34th**
Arvind S Patil	*Karad*	**75th**

Standing (2nd Row)

R Venkatramanan	*Bombay*	**38th**
P Suryanarayanan	*Pune*	**39th**
Rajat Bhargava	*Saharanpur*	**42nd**
Deepak Goyal	*New Delhi*	**43rd**
Tarun Anand	*Delhi*	**44th**
Suresh V	*New Delhi*	**46th**
T K Anand	*Bombay*	**47th**
Ankur Narang	*New Delhi*	**48th**
S Rajesh	*Madras*	**49th**
Ashis S Tarafdar	*Bombay*	**50th**
P Venkataraghavan	*Madras*	**51st**
C V R Kishore	*Jamshedpur*	**52nd**
Shashank Prasad	*Bhilai*	**53rd**
Rakesh Kumar Rai	*Bhilai*	**55th**
Joy Sarbadhikary	*Gwalior*	**57th**

Standing (3rd Row)

Satya Prakash Ranjan	*New Delhi*	**58th**
Gaurav Banga	*New Delhi*	**59th**
Gaurav Mishra	*Ichapur*	**60th**
Sumeer K Bhola	*New Delhi*	**61st**
K V S S Vijay	*Hyderabad*	**62nd**
Navin Kumar Singh	*Ranchi*	**63rd**
Hitesh Oberoi	*New Delhi*	**64th**
Archisman Rudra	*Calcutta*	**66th**
Prasan Roy	*Meerut*	**67th**
Manu Vasandani	*Jamshedpur*	**93rd**
G Aravind	*Cochin*	**94th**
J Ramesh	*Secunderabad*	**95th**
D Pavan Kumar	*Hyderabad*	**96th**
P Jagan Mohan	*Madras*	**97th**
S Vijay	*New Delhi*	**81st**
Ahmad Nadeem	*New Delhi*	

Standing (Top Row)

Shyamal Misra	*Kanpur*
R N Mohan Sarma	*Warangal*
Praveen Gupta	*Lucknow*
Saurab Nog	*Kota*
Anindya Ghosh	*Jamshedpur*
P Siddarth	*Coimbatore*
Amit Shukla	*Madras*
Anurag Verma	*Dewas*
T Srivathsa	*Hyderabad*
G Mohan	*Mysore*
Pratik Datta	*Calcutta*
V Rahul	*Bhilai*
Indranil De	*Dehradun*
P Gopikrishnan	*Trivandrum*
Gurpreet Singh	*Chandigarh*
Lokesh M Gupta	*Calcutta*

Absentees

Miss Shivani Gupta	*New Delhi*
Amitabha Roy	*Calcutta*
S Rajagopalan	*Madras*
N A Talwalkar	*Bombay*

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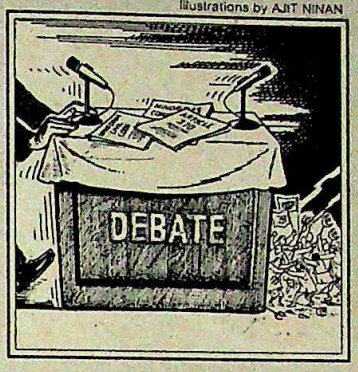
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Secular Doublespeak

Illustrations by AJIT NINAN



AHI Secularism. That noble faith professed by all political parties but practiced by none.

Political adherents of the great secular Congress party gave us the 1984 anti-Sikh riots in Delhi, the Muslim Women's Bill of 1986 and the Ayodhya *shilanyas* ceremony of November 9, 1989. And post-independence the Marxists displayed their own commitment to this credo by creating the district of Malappuram in Kerala on communal lines under Muslim demands. The Janata Dal began its electoral campaign last year armed with a *fatwa* from the Jama Masjid's Imam Bukhari. And what to say of the BJP. Its roots are solidly imbedded in the RSS whose rabid ranks seek their millennium in some vague Hindu Rashtra in which the upstart minorities will be accorded second class status.

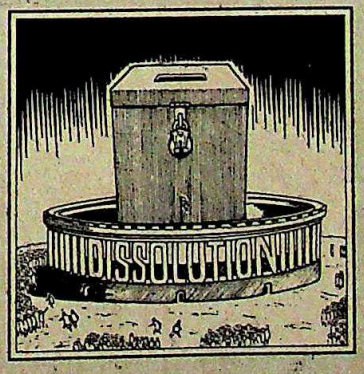
There are two brutal realities. First, a Hinduism mired in superstitions, religious exploitation by venal priestly hierarchies at shrines, and discrimination against "untouchables" can hardly be the panacea for the nation's woes. Second, Muslims continue to be economically more deprived, grossly under-represented in government jobs, and can therefore make a legitimate case of facing widespread discrimination.

The BJP's leadership, however, claims that it doesn't believe in a theocratic state but rather questions the anomalies of "secular" India: when India chose secularism after Partition while Pakistan opted for an Islamic state, why then the need for a minorities (as against a human rights) commission? Why then a special religious code for Muslims instead of a uniform civil code? Why can Hindu religious properties be taken over by the state while Muslim religious real estate cannot?

No one can deny these are issues that should be debated. But instead of debate we get medievalist Rath Yatras that vitiate the atmosphere and whip religious hysteria to unfathomable dimensions. Similarly the self-styled secular parties and Muslim leaders, instead of addressing the real issues of greater economic and social equality for Muslims in order to bring them into the mainstream, are content to sweep them under the carpet, preferring to play politics with religious insecurities to carve out vote banks. The people may be ready for synthesis, but the leaders are not: depend as they do for their political survival on the continuing separateness of their identities.

All this can serve to only harden attitudes and to plunge the country into the kind of inhuman intolerance and armed bigotry that bedeviled the medieval ages.

Back to the People



IN the slime and grime of Indian politics that was on shameful public display last fortnight the country's have-been and would-be leaders, mindlessly immersed as they were in their numbers games, petty calculations, and con manoeuvres, eventually lost sight of their very raison d'etre: the people's mandate.

It was a shaky and tentative mandate at best. And the Government—because of the Janata Dal's bungling, ineptitude, and opportunism, because of the BJP's religious adventurism—simply forfeited its right to go on governing whether by coalition or through the complex system of support in Parliament from the outside.

And in a democracy, mandates are non-transferable. One man's one vote is not a commodity that can be passed on like a piece of used clothing. Once the purpose and the ideals for which that vote is cast are defeated nobody has the right to claim its inheritance by default leave alone by conspiracy. The social contract by which the people lend their sovereignty to a government for a specified period lies suspended. And the politicians must go back to the people to fashion a fresh compact.

Last fortnight the mandate given to the Vishwanath Pratap Singh government lay shattered. It cannot be claimed, as an automatic extension, by Rajiv Gandhi whose once powerful ruling party was roundly rejected during the last election, nor appropriated by Chandra Shekhar or by any other opportunistic grouping or alliance.

The morally correct thing to do was for the politicians to go back to the people and seek afresh their permission to govern. Doubts have been raised about holding elections in a climate already seething with caste and communal tensions. Elections, the politicians have been warning, will lead to violence on an unprecedented scale.

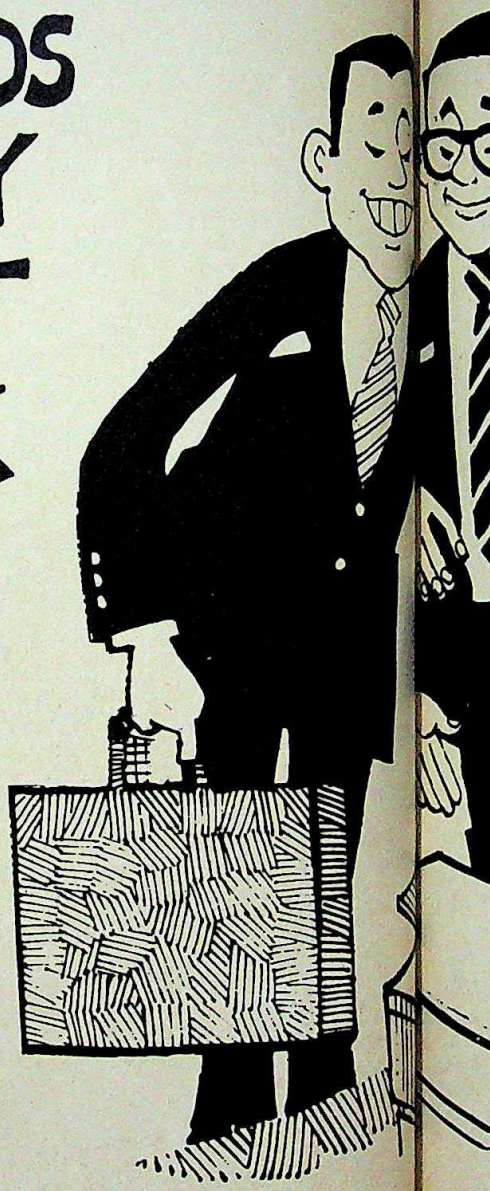
These concerns may also be inspired by a desire to buy time to secure the best political advantage. And who is to say that if elections are delayed, they will be more peaceful? May not a long postponement provide even more time for politicians to whip up even greater casteist and communal frenzy in search of votes?

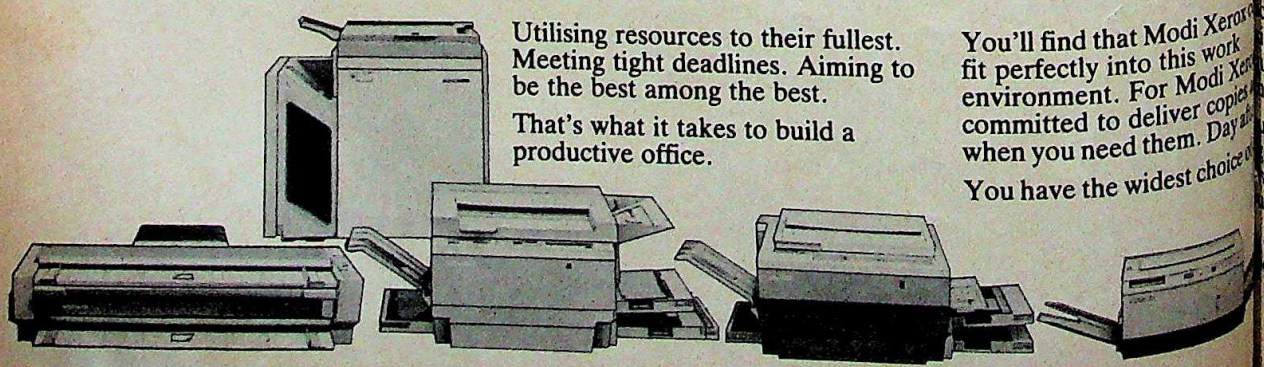
Perhaps these fears are deliberately created by the vote-seekers who prey on the public's insecurity. The reality on the ground could be quite different—it could be a people seeking the ease of harmony and stability. In a democracy there are no short cuts. The people must vote and the state apparatus must do everything in its power to ensure the rule of law and order.

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Home Blues

● The Home Ministry is perhaps the single most important victim of the virtual paralysis that has afflicted the Government during the last several months. And the



symptoms are most evident in critical states like terrorist-torn Punjab.

Even though that state is under Central rule, the governor has been hamstrung in taking critical decisions because of the Home Ministry's lethargy. Until a month ago, former minister of state for home affairs Subodh Kant Sahay was assigned the Punjab portfolio but was inexplicably taken off the assignment. The state administration was informed that Mufti Mohammed Sayeed would deal directly with the state's affairs. But senior officials complained that important files have been held up because the Mufti just does not respond and is unavailable after evening hours.

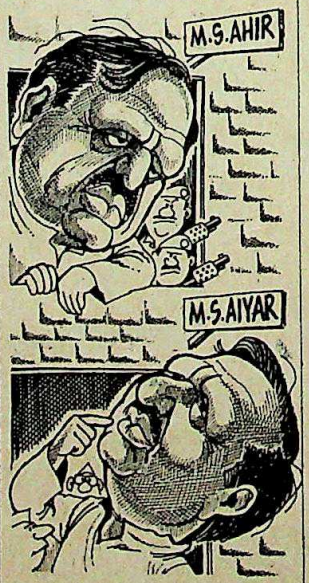
One decision hanging fire, for example, is what to do with Simranjit Singh Mann who was recently put under detention after he entered the Golden Temple with arms. Under a new get-tough policy, the state administration has recommended that Mann again be placed under indefinite arrest under the NSA. But with the Home Ministry it's a case of apply, apply, no reply.

Twin Trauma

● They are as different in style and intellectuality as chalk from cheese. And even though the two don't think alike they certainly look alike. They are Mani Shankar Aiyar, the glib-tongued bureaucrat turned politician and Mulayam Singh Yadav, the English-bashing chief minister of Uttar Pradesh.

And in their white kurta pyjamas, they are also sartorially kindred. Aiyar admits embarrassing exasperation at being mistaken for Yadav or even being dubbed as his twin. What's worse, he says, is that their initials are also the same—MSA. But isn't Yadav MSY? No, says Aiyar. In Uttar Pradesh's caste nomenclature Yadav is a synonym for Ahir. And so Yadav is actually—MSA.

Cartoons by AJIT NINAN



Ways of Escape

● As far as the Delhi Police is concerned, the 1976 Emergency is not yet over. On the eve of the Delhi bandh called on November 5 by the Bharatiya Janata Party to protest



against the killings of kar sewaks in Ayodhya, the local constabulary fanned out in different parts of the capital to make preventive arrests of trouble-makers.

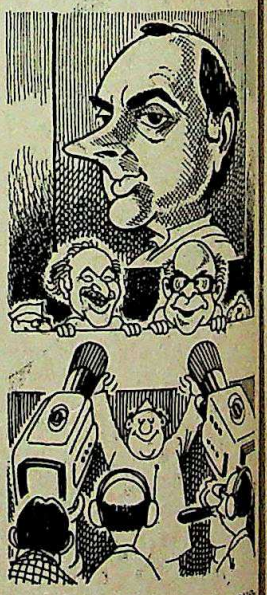
The list of those to be nabbed was the same as that compiled by Mrs Gandhi's Emergency administrators who rounded up thousands of RSS activists who had gone underground. Among the prize targets of that drive was a firebrand student leader. So, 14 years later, six burly policemen knocked on his door again in order to arrest him. But found that he was not there. Had he flown the coop? Hardly.

He was living only a few miles away in a posh official bungalow bearing his name-plate—Arun Jaitley, additional solicitor general to the Union Government.

Publicity Ploys

● Congressmen as a lot are fiercely fond of publicity and have their own odd ways to ensure that they are taken care of by the media. They still pine for the days of former information minister K.K. Tewari when they basked exclusively in Doordarshan's limelight.

Sometimes though, the party does get a share in some of the crumbs of Doordarshan's cake. And now that they're getting more footage they're insisting on getting more mileage out of it for their leader Rajiv Gandhi. As the TV crews moved from one party office to another during the past few weeks of quick political developments, AICC(I) spokesman V.N. Gadgil became almost a regular feature in the evening news. That must have upset someone at the party headquarters. One fine evening it was discovered that the sitting arrangement in the AICC(I) press room had been changed. A huge picture of Rajiv Gandhi with a broad benign smile, was looming large behind Gadgil. It's called maximising publicity for maximum leader



TAIL PIECE

(Overheard)

Because of the close replay of the sordid backroom manoeuvrings by which Charan Singh replaced Morarji Desai as prime minister with the help of the Congress, Chandra Shekhar should change his name to Charan Shekhar.

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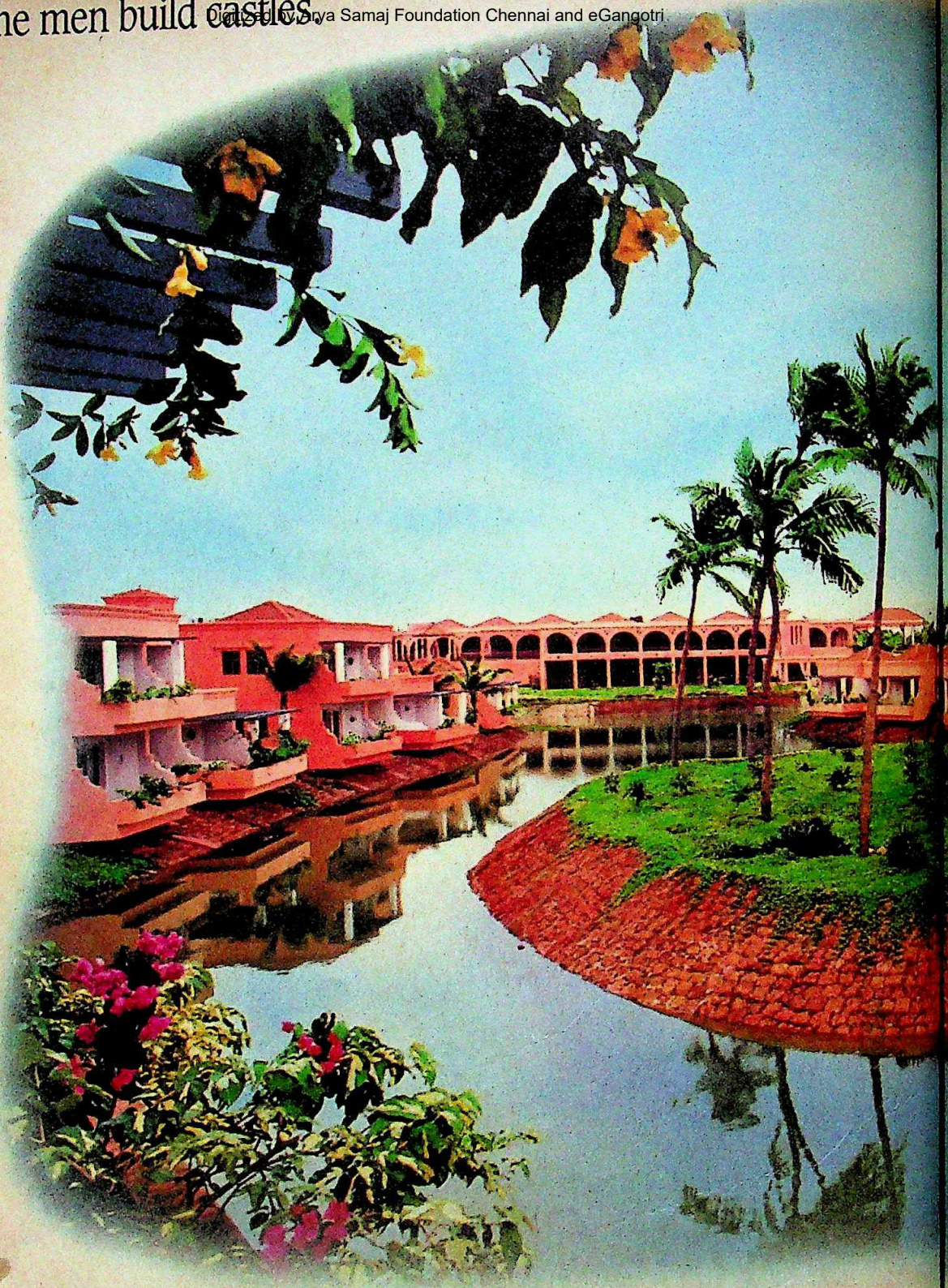
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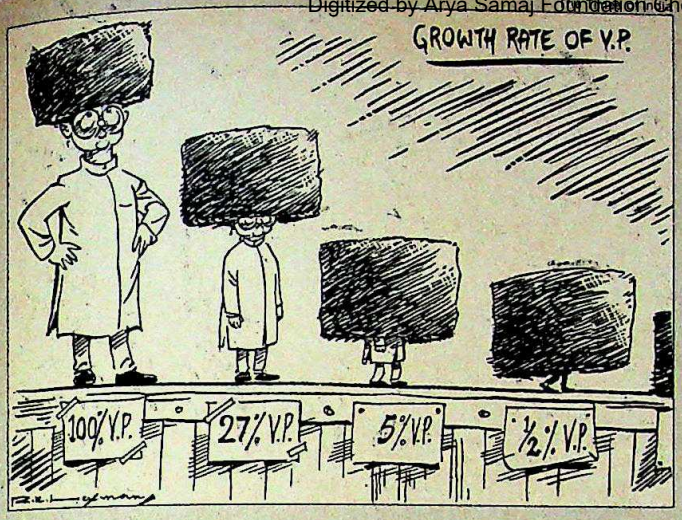
JGT

JGT FABRICS

Creations for a Masterpiece.

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• *Before the sapling we planted could grow into a full tree, it was axed.*
■ V.P. SINGH, addressing a public meeting in New Delhi

• *Such is V.P. Singh's love for his chair that he is not even opening his seat belt.*
■ RAJIV GANDHI

• *I am not a fool to accept the Congress(I)'s offer to head a national government.*
■ CHANDRA SHEKHAR

• *In my style of politics the use of force against people is the last resort.*
■ MULAYAM SINGH YADAV in *The Times of India*

• *Want to know when the Congress began accepting Shourie's writings as the gospel truth? Ever since he got the Padma Bhushan.*
■ M.J. AKBAR, at a press conference in New Delhi

• *V.P.'s nationalism is rooted in stark casteism*
■ K.K. TEWARY, in *Probe India*

• *First we had Singh's claim to be value-based, then issue-based, then reaction-based and now there is an attempt to make it defection-based.*
■ KAMAL NATH, Congress(I) MP

• *It would be a tragedy if this government does not run its full term but the tragedy would be even bigger if it does.*
■ MAHENDRA SINGH TIKAIT, in *Probe India*

• *It is ironical that Hindus should have to go with a begging bowl for their rights in their own motherland.*
■ BAL THACKERAY, Shiv Sena leader

• *We are waiting for the day when a saffron flag is unfurled at the Lal Qila.*
■ V.K. MALHOTRA, BJP secretary

• *A temple is built by men of god, not by politicians.*
■ GURCHARAN SINGH TOHRA, president, SGPC in *The Independent*

• *I felt like a superman. I almost felt like god.*
■ RAJESH KHANNA, on his earlier stardom in *The Times of India*

• *I have no hesitation in admitting that eventually the better side won.*
■ JHAMAN LAL, Indian hockey coach, in *Sportsworld*

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Cartoons by JAYANTO

MOCKING MANDAL

■ The writing on the wall is clear: the Mandal fracas is not going to die down. That's what it seems like from the bizarre turn the anti-Mandal stir has taken. Take, for example, what some unidentified—but enterprising—forwards from Hissar in Haryana have come up with.



Cashing in on the militant mood of the day, they have been advertising fictitious crash courses in job-oriented subjects. A crop of posters titled *Rozgar Samachar* offer courses ranging from dacoity to bomb-making. Though the duration of the course varies, what is important is they all guarantee jobs in two months.

Taking a cue from Mandal, strict reservations are being enforced for admission. Those eligible: upper class unemployed youth. The name of the college: V.P. Singh Institute for Forward Classes. The institute now awaits government recognition.

POWER HUNGRY

■ Tempers in West Bengal have reached a boiling point. And not for any ideological reasons. It's just that the frequent power cuts have finally got to the people. Bearing the brunt of Calcutta's fury are the employees of the state electricity board.

That the board personnel are often under attack for no fault of theirs was clear last month. Disaster struck as a statue of the Goddess Durga being immersed during the Jagadhatri puja was knocked down by an overhead wire and partially damaged.

This sparked off an outcry among the devotees



who charged into the local electricity office and ransacked it. Even the hapless employees were not spared the mob's frenzy and were soundly beaten up.

The electricity board employees are still shocked from being at the receiving end of the wrath of the gods. Clearly, the devotees are a bunch of live wires.

DOUBLE DEALINGS

■ If the open market is determined by the laws of supply and demand, so is the country's thriving black market. Most astounded when confronted with this reality were the executives of a multinational company in Calcutta.

Last fortnight a novel



delegation of dealers visited the firm—shopowners from the infamous Fancy Market, a haven of smuggled goods. But even the conservative executives—who have a reputation for being squeaky clean in their dealings—sat up to listen to a proposal put forward by the dishonest dealers. Reason: it made good business sense for both sides. The black marketeers suggested the company keep them informed of its latest products and the likely prices. This way they would ensure that the equipment that they "imported" wasn't placed in the same price range.

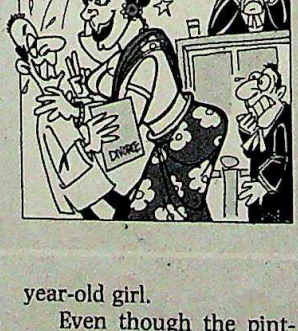
The deafening silence of the executives, however, spoke volumes.

SPIRITED SPOUSE

■ Hell hath no fury like a woman scorned. This was more than apparent from a recent incident at a Lok Adalat in Borsad, Gujarat.

It all began when a man filed for divorce but his wife refused to give in. As the case grew into a long-drawn-out affair, the husband gave up hope and the judge began to despair. Suddenly, the woman decided to grant the long-awaited divorce. But on a condition.

The overjoyed husband blindly agreed. Only to do a double-take when the woman stated that she be allowed to beat her partner

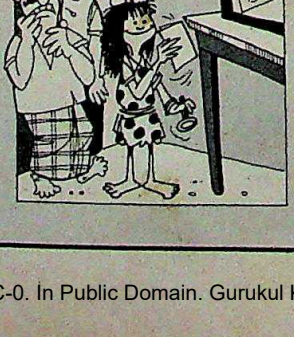


five times with her slipper before letting him go.

If the judge was taken aback at this bizarre form of retribution, he was more stunned when the husband accepted without a demur. So, in full view of all present, the woman walloped her worthless spouse, who then beat a hasty retreat.

A MINOR VOTE

■ When the previous government decided to lower the voting age, there was much celebration among the country's youth. However, the people of Kerala took the measure to its extremes and even included in their voters' list a 10-



year-old girl.

Even though the pint-sized girl looked not a day older than 10, according to papers she was as legal as an 18-year-old. Perhaps the enumerator who assigned her a voter's slip during the district council elections in Meppayoor was inspired by the Year of the Girl Child.

What made the entire episode even more incredible was the fact that the age of the girl's mother was listed as 25. According to calculations, that made the mother all of seven years when she delivered a daughter who is now eligible to vote. Now if that isn't democracy, what is?

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THE GOVERNMENT

HOW LONG WILL IT LAST?

By PRABHU CHAWLA and HARINDER BAWEJA

IT was as if a Congress(I) prime minister was being sworn in. More specifically, as if Rajiv Gandhi himself was making a triumphant return. While Chandra Shekhar primed himself for the long sought-after glory of the rostrum, hastily erected in the forecourt of 3, South Avenue Lane, Congress(I) flags were brandished as if in applause. After slumbering in the shadow of ignominous defeat and vague attempts at soul-searching for almost an year, it was time to beat the drums.

Rows upon rows of Seva Dal workers, immaculately dressed in starched white, lined the road leading to the venue. More Seva Dal workers atop an open Gypsy jeep, with pictures of Rajiv Gandhi and Indira Gandhi up front, sped, deliriously happy, up and down the lane, shouting slogans. Others danced around a beaming Chandra Shekhar to the deafening sound of drumbeats. It could as well have been the unrolling of the red carpet for a rebel and a prodigal son who had come back home repentant but victorious.

When the swearing-in finally took place, all swift six minutes of it, with Devi Lal coming in once again as deputy prime minister, there were more cheers for former prime minister Rajiv Gandhi than for the new leaders.

For the second time in the independent nation's history, a non-Congress experiment at the Centre had collapsed, imploding with terrible and all-consuming conspiratorial intensity. Sabotage, backstabbing, horsetrading reminiscent of the fall of the Janata government in 1979 were once again on vulgar display.

The new ruling party—a ragtag rump of 60 break-away Janata Dal MPs that promptly christened itself Janata Dal(S) (for socialist after the self-styled ideology of its leader)—emerged as India's first living example of the proverbial tail wagging the dog. Supported as it is from outside by a combined 211 MPs of the Congress(I) camp, it is an incongruous illustration of the depths of instability into which opportunistic politicking can plunge a nation.

But then, no one was really thinking about the nation's long-term political health, not Chandra Shekhar's group, and certainly not the Congress(I) whose leaders spent the fortnight exulting in self-congratulatory rhetoric.

Said Congress(I) spokesman Vithal Gadgil: "It has been a myth that non-Congress experiments can be successful only because they have anti-Congress postures and policies. Only a working, and not a hostile, arrangement with the Congress(I) can ensure stability of any government."

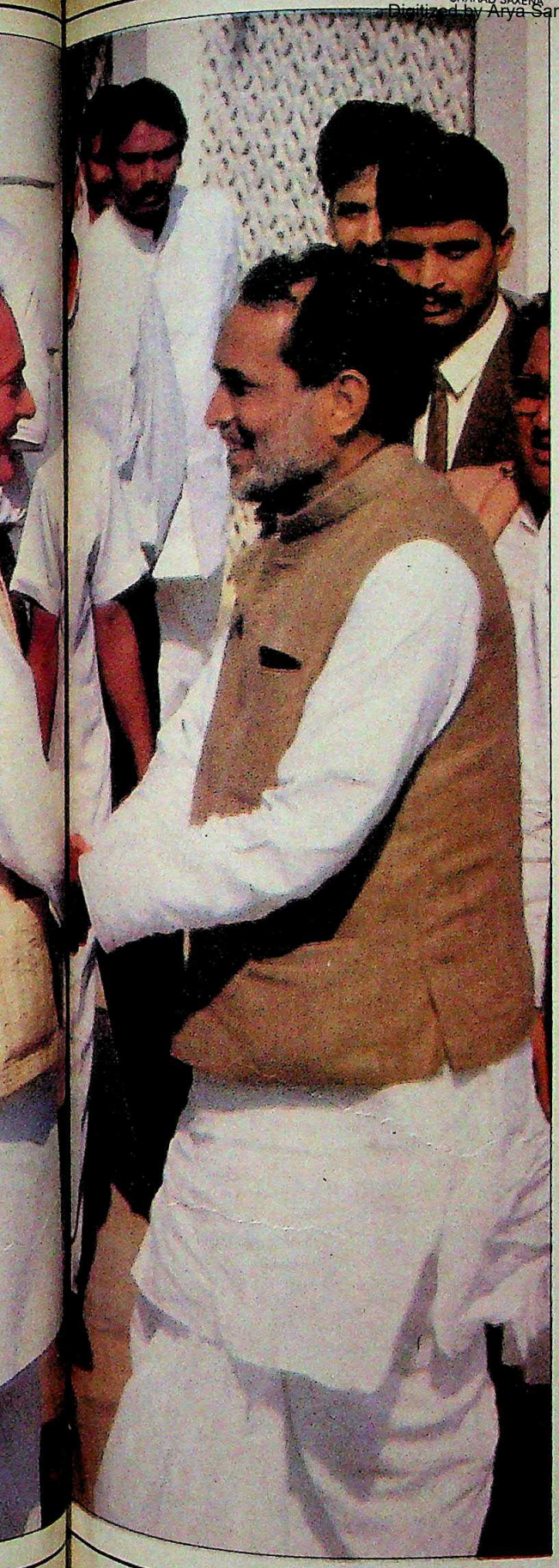
And as if to erase all doubts about who his mentor was in the amiable doublecross that he played, Chandra Shekhar made it a point to call on the Congress(I) President Rajiv



Rajiv and Chandra Shekhar: fragile alliance

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SHARAD SAXENA

Gandhi less than 48 hours after being invited by President R. Venkataraman to form the new Government. And there was an edge of wicked anticipation in the glee expressed in the Congress(I) party at the developments that had rebounded in its favour. A party general secretary boasted: "Now it's up to us. We call the shots."

THE CONGRESS(I) GAMEPLAN

ACTUALLY, the Congress(I) had begun to call the shots immediately after the BJP announced its withdrawal of support to the V.P. Singh government. And the signal was as clear as daylight. When the party announced that it was willing to extend its support to the Janata Dal minus V.P. Singh it was a direct signal to Chandra Shekhar to try and split the Janata Dal.

The only uncertainty was how many MPs would follow him. The magic number that was required was 60. This together with the grouping of 211 consisting of the Congress(I) and its allies would provide not only a total of 271 to constitute a majority in Parliament but would also add up to one-third of the original party's strength. This is the minimum strength required to split a party and escape the punitive sanctions of the Anti-Defection Act.

And in order to demonstrate that the Congress(I) intended to play ball, Rajiv instructed his Gujarat unit to bail out the pro-Chandra Shekhar Chief Minister Chimanbhai Patel, who was facing a no-confidence motion after the state unit of the BJP withdrew support. The gesture was enough to persuade the anti-V.P. Singh camp that Rajiv meant business and that forming a government at the Centre with Congress(I)'s support was a viable proposition.

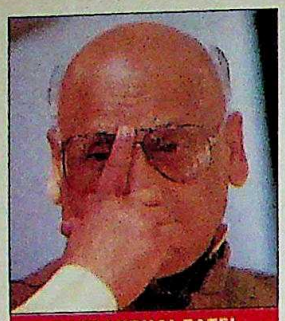
The real battle for the head-count began after November 2—just five days before the no-confidence vote in Parliament—when Congress(I)'s ace wheeler-dealer R.K. Dhawan, in concert with Chimanbhai Patel and Maharashtra Chief Minister Sharad Pawar—flown especially for the mission to the capital—began an intense infiltration of the Janata Dal camps to cajole and coerce the still undecideds into defecting.

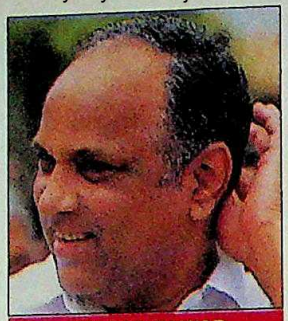
But despite their combined skills—and the bottomless pit of financial resources at their command—they were unable to muster the required strength because of the ominous silence from Mulayam Singh's camp that controlled some 12 MPs. Hectic lobbying in Uttar Pradesh, led by former chief minister N.D. Tiwari, finally produced results. The first signal that Yadav's men were ready to bolt V.P. Singh's party came with the resignation of communications minister Janeshwar Mishra. It was only then that Chandra Shekhar could collect 58 MPs at Devi Lal's residence and raise the battle cry with conviction.

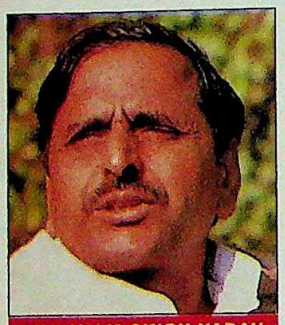
A key part of the Congress(I) gameplan was to keep Devi Lal at bay. Even though the Jat chieftain had thrown his lot with Chandra Shekhar, he staked his own claims to the premiership. For the Congress(I), this posed an excruciating political dilemma. The party had scored public debating points against V.P. Singh by attacking him on the Meham issue and would find it difficult to justify supporting Devi Lal. More importantly, Yadav's support was critical. Even though the Uttar Pradesh chief minister and V.P. Singh have been at daggers drawn due to personality clashes and because of Yadav's determination to commandeer the state as his own power base, he is even more distrustful of the Jat leadership within the Janata Dal that had once tried to install his rival Ajit Singh as Uttar Pradesh chief minister. It was Tiwari who persuaded the Yadav camp to break away after giving them an assurance that the Congress(I) would back him in the state and keep his government from collapsing. He

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CHIMANBHAI PATEL


SHARAD PAWAR


MULAYAM SINGH YADAV

Pawar, Patel and Yadav helped in forging the Congress(I)-Chandra Shekhar alliance.

was also assured that the Congress(I) would not support Devi Lal as prime minister.

Even in Congress(I) circles the general litany was that Devi Lal could not be "entrusted with the affairs of the country". Stalwarts like Dinesh Singh, Shiv Shankar and Balram Jakhar were not so keen to support Chandra Shekhar but were cajoled into acceptance by others on the ground that Chandra Shekhar may ultimately be persuaded to join the Congress(I) at election time—an understanding that could not have been reached with Devi Lal.

It was not just after the crises broke out that the Congress(I) tried to make contact with Mulayam Singh. The effort began from September onwards when Rajiv during a visit to his constituency of Amethi openly cast a political eye on him. In his speeches Rajiv made it clear that the party would support the chief minister in his epic battle with the BJP. The hint was obvious: if he agreed to take on V.P. Singh he could expect all the backing from the Congress(I). Mulayam Singh who by then had an indication of things to come, winked back at Rajiv. Later Rajiv met Yadav. The stage was set for the coup.

JANATA DAL

Secular Tack

VISHWANATH Pratap Singh is bloodied but unbowed. The mood within his truncated Janata Dal follows his defeat is surprisingly upbeat. Party workers seem unconcerned about losing a third of one's party and the prime ministership within the space of a few days.

Party spokesman Jaipal Reddy reflected the general insouciance when he called the Chandra Shekhar split a welcome 'slimming operation' for a party that had grown flabby. Part of their euphoria stems from the conviction that the Shekhar Government is merely a passing phenomenon. The emphasis is on getting the party poised for the next round. To this end, a gameplan has already been drawn up for re-building the party and establishing it as the only alternative to the Congress(I).

Janata Dal President S.R. Bommai has decided that the internal workings of the party will be overhauled first. This will be followed by rallies and public meetings around the country. Bommai's contention is that the entire party will be on the move, and it would try and explain to the people why the government had to be sacrificed and the issues the party stood for. Says he: "V.P. Singh's plan no longer revolves around members of Parliament or state assemblies, but the people."

The 'going back to the people' campaign will consist largely of selling the Raja's 'clean' image. Janata Dal leaders claim V.P. Singh is perhaps the only prime minister to bow out of office with his pristine image untainted by as much as a scintilla of doubt about his financial rectitude.

V.P. Singh will now try to forge an alliance of what he calls 'secular and democratic forces'. If elections were to be held soon, he would go for seat adjustments with the Left in the north, the east and the south. During the last election he was caught between the Left and the BJP. Now he can go all out in proving his secular credentials and win the support of the trade unions, landless labour and the liberal intelligentsia.

But while the 'Mr Clean' card will no doubt be played to all its worth and moral posturing may be elevated to an art form by its most experienced practitioner, V.P. Singh will have to counter the growing perception that he is a sectional leader. And though there are obvious advan-

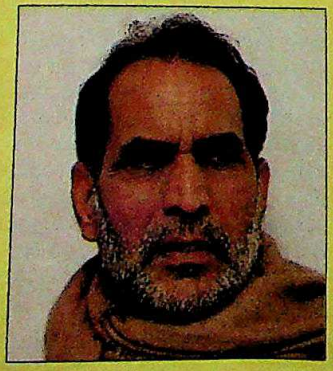
tages in ha... thinking he... Harijan vote... has a consid...

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V.P. Sin... electoral ba... allies—the ... safely be left ... He's also hop... sharing the ... expected fai... Chandra Sh... V.P. Singh."

NOW AND THEN

CHANDRA SHEKHAR ON RAJIV & CONGRESS(I)

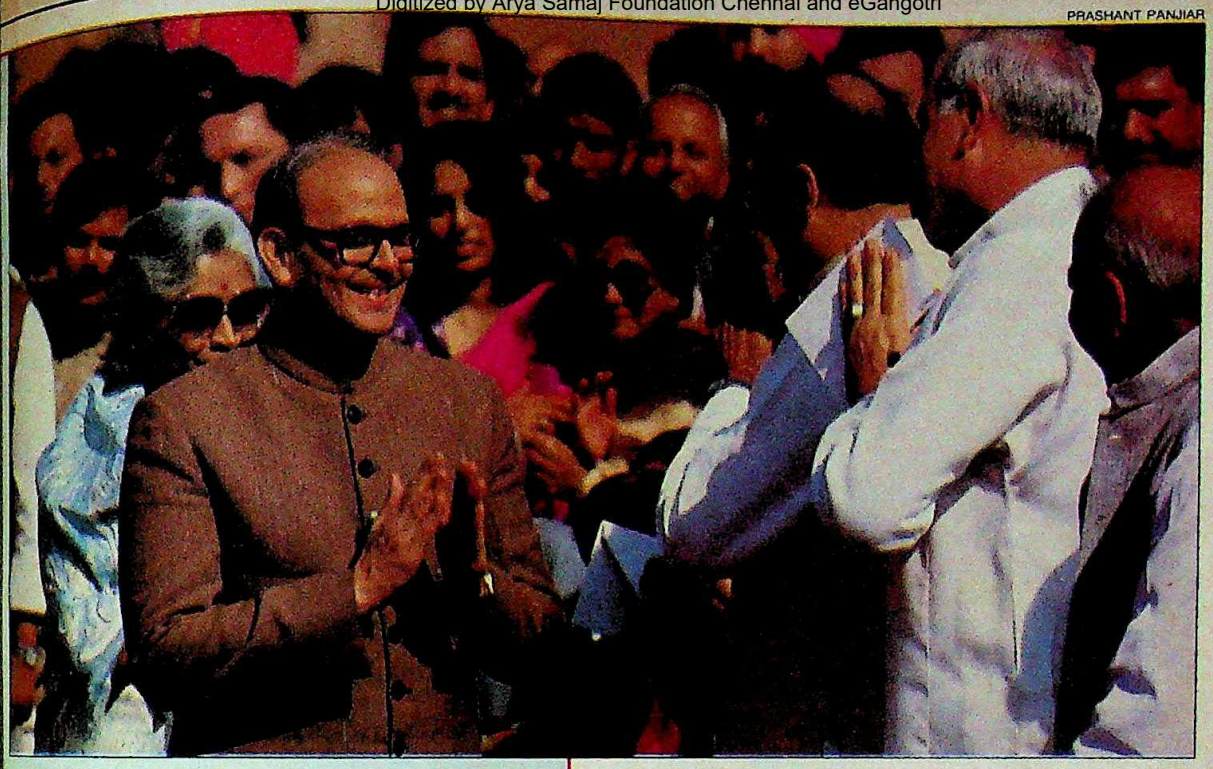


- *Rajiv Gandhi is a child who has entered politics by mistake.* —November 1989
- *I see no difference between V.P. Singh and Rajiv Gandhi. We want an alternative not substitute.* —January 1990
- Rajiv Gandhi is sincere in his commitment to the country. —November 1990
- We have agreed to work together to save the nation. —November 1990

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PRASHANT PANJIAR



V.P. Singh with supporters: aggressive mood

tages in having solid vote banks, he should beware of thinking he enjoys a monopoly of the OBC, Muslim and Harijan votes. Chandra Shekhar's group of defectors also has a considerable standing in these circles.

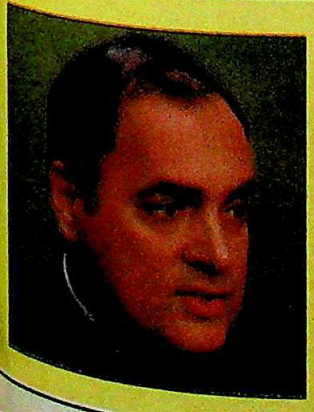
For the moment, though, Janata Dal leaders are refusing to temper their optimism—even when it's pointed out to them that the chances of defeating the Congress(I) in the next election are negligible given that the opposition vote will be split. V.P. Singh, they insist, has made a concerted effort to destroy the Congress(I)'s traditional vote bank.

V.P. Singh himself is convinced that any future electoral battle will be confined to northern India. His allies—the DMK, the Telugu Desam and the Left—can safely be left to slug it out with the Congress(I) in the south. He's also hoping that the Congress(I) will be lumbered with sharing the blame for the Chandra Shekhar Government's expected failures. As Reddy says: "All the 'records' of the Chandra Shekhar regime will be debited to the account of V.P. Singh."

—BHASKAR ROY

WHO'S RIDING ON WHOSE BACK?

RIGHT now there is a confluence of interest between the Congress(I) and Chandra Shekhar. Both have taken their long-cherished revenge on their prime target of mutual hatred—V.P. Singh. Both desperately want to avoid a mid-term poll which they believe—given the polarised nature of the country—can be best exploited by the BJP's Hindu card and V.P. Singh's vote bank of the OBC-Muslim combine. The idea is to let the climate cool off so both can better prepare for an election and strengthen their relative standing. This suits Chandra Shekhar just fine for the moment. He has the backing of a national party and the opportunity to raise an electoral war chest of funds with the backing of industrialists like Dhirubhai Ambani and Jayant Malhotra. And manipulator that he is, he will waste no time in sowing dissensions within the Congress(I) with the power of his official patronage and meal-tickets in order to solidify his bargaining power with it, or even emerge in a position to destabilise its leadership



NOW AND THEN

RAJIV GANDHI ON CHANDRA SHEKHAR

- *We can only lose from a deal with Chandra Shekhar.* —July 1989
- Chandra Shekhar is a former Congressman. We trust him. —November 1990

CHANDRA SHEKHAR ON DEVI LAL

- *Devi Lal is a highly self-opinionated person. He will not listen to anyone.* —April 1990
- I have Devi Lal's blessings. After all he is Tau. —November 1990

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structure. He has wrecked that party before and will not shy away from doing so again if he gets the opportunity.

For the Congress(I), Chandra Shekhar provides another advantage. In engineering his defection from the Janata Dal, the Congress(I) has also tried to split the vote bank that V.P. Singh had created and was hoping to nurture into an unbeatable combine. Singh's gameplan had been to split the urban forward class vote between the BJP and the Congress(I) while consolidating the Muslims and backward classes for himself. These calculations, the Congress(I) hopes to upset because it believes Shekhar and many others in his group enjoy support not only among Muslims but also among OBCs. And Bahujan Samaj Party leader Kanshi Ram is also favourably inclined towards this group giving it a solid chance to bank on the Harijan vote.

THE INTERNAL TENSIONS

CHANDRA Shekhar knows that his 60-member group is being supported—and maybe not for too long and very loyally—by a 195-member legion from the outside. Political priorities could change, and they probably will, if popular expectations are to be considered. As it is, a free-for-all for cabinet berths began soon after the green signal from the President to Chandra Shekhar, with which the dissidents had cursorily "dismissed" V.P. Singh and Devi Lal blessed Chandra Shekhar publicly placing his hand on his head, he was found closeted in hectic confabulations with I.K. Gujral, Mufti Mohammed Sayeed and S.R. Bommai. According to George Fernandes, Devi Lal wou

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PROBE POLITICS

In the Chandra Shekhar-Rajiv Gandhi combine many ongoing probes will become double-edged swords. While Rajiv may try to have them stalled, Shekhar would like to keep them as a Damocles' sword over the Congress(I).



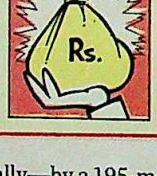
BOFORS: Since the court decision on whether to name the account holders is expected, the Congress(I) may force Shekhar to withdraw the Letter Rogatory. The CBI has asked for the setting up of a committee to examine earlier recommendations and a re-evaluation by a panel. Shekhar may find it difficult to backtrack. But he could stall the investigations.



AIRBUS A 320 DEAL: The CBI has tracked down some NRIs and local middlemen who received commissions. It has also traced a Swiss account opened with a senior CBI official's relative's help, it has leads to prove that a part of the kickbacks was deposited in it. The agency was almost ready with a charge-sheet. But now it may softpedal.



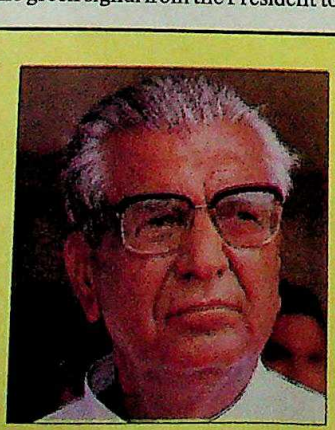
HDW SUBMARINE DEAL: Investigations are at an advanced stage. Key witnesses have been questioned and the CBI has found discrepancies in the technical evaluation. It has suggested the appointment of another technical committee to examine the report which recommended the HDW deal. Again, Shekhar is unlikely to withdraw the FIR but could force the CBI to go slow.



ST KITTS FORGERY CASE: The outgoing government had finalised a Letter Rogatory for soliciting information. Though some of the main accused like Chandraswamy have close links with the new ruling clique, the investigations may continue.

NOW AND THEN

DEVI LAL ON RAJIV GANDHI AND THE CONGRESS(I)



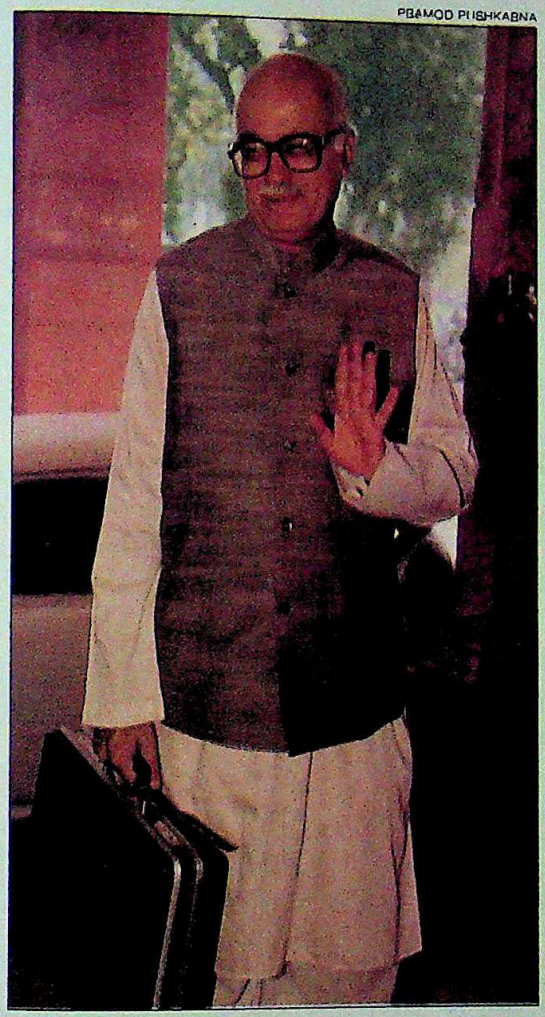
- ***You cannot put a country like India in the hands of a man like Rajiv Gandhi.*** —October 1989
- ***Earlier we had the great Mahatma Gandhi and now, what do we have, Rajiv Gandhi.*** —November 1989
- **There is nothing wrong in seeking the Congress(I)'s support. Chandra Shekhar and I are also Congressmen.** —November 1990
- **I thank Rajiv Gandhi and the Congress(I) for supporting us.** —November 1990

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BHARATIYA JANATA PARTY

A Hardline Future


PRAMOD PUSHKARNA

The BJP has returned to the RSS family fold and hopes to exploit the Hindu card to improve its electoral chances.

AFTER loitering around in the arena of mainstream politics like a vagrant child, the BJP has finally returned to the RSS family fold. The RSS code of using the name of Ram and spreading the theory of the *Hindu Rashtra* will from now on be the BJP's war cry too.

The tremendous public response to its stand on the Ayodhya controversy has convinced the party that this issue can be further exploited in the next elections. Besides the committed 18 lakh RSS cadres, many new faces have joined its ranks swelling the party's confidence and ego.

In their optimistic calculations, the BJP leaders reckon that the effective handling of the Hindu card can improve its Lok Sabha tally from 86 to at least 120 seats. Senior leaders are certain the party will double its strength from 17 seats to at least 35 in the two states of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar. In Maharashtra it hopes to jump from 10 to 16 seats and from one to three in Haryana. In Gujarat, Rajasthan, Delhi and Himachal Pradesh, it hopes to maintain its present strength of 32. In Madhya Pradesh it actually estimates a slide from its present 27 seats. But that according to them can be offset by "freak victories" as in Karnataka and Jammu. Says General Secretary Jay Prakash Mathur: "The mood is upbeat. Barring a few, we will contest all seats. The aim is to get a strong voice in the Lok Sabha."

To reach this goal, the party plans to step up agitational politics supported by a high pitch Ayodhya campaign by the VHP. And as if that is not enough it is planning to form kar sewa committees in Mathura and Varanasi and is threatening to rake up disputes over 3,000 other such mosques all over the country. And to add more punch to its rhetoric it has coined slogans. Two samples: *"Jo Hindu hit ki baat karega; vahee desh par raaj karega"* (Only those who talk about Hindu interests will rule the country) and *"Jo Hindu hit par karega chot; use kadapi na dena vote"* (Don't vote for those who harm Hindu interests).

While the VHP takes care of the emotional campaign on Ayodhya, the BJP plans to exploit the political ramifications of the controversy. Besides, issues like price rise, Jammu & Kashmir and Punjab, the focus of its campaign will be on what it terms as discrimination of Hindus, minorityism of other political parties, religion vs nationalism and the supremacy of the Hindu culture over other territorial cultures. In the heat of electioneering, this theme has all the potential to degenerate into an anti-minority agenda straight out of a fascist's handbook.

Such plans for the future have greatly upset the softliners within the party. Atal Behari Vajpayee avoided a VHP public rally in Delhi while senior leaders requested the party's Muslim member, Sikandar Bakht, to shun dharnas where the BJP youth were raising slogans demanding pogroms against the Muslims.

Leaders in the three BJP-ruled states of Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Himachal Pradesh are also hesitant to follow this confrontational campaign. They fear that such rhetoric will make them vulnerable to charges of showing irresponsibility while in the chair. This attack has already started. Says CPI(M) leader Harkishan Singh Surjeet: "Having cast its lot in communalising the situation, the BJP will go all the way. To avoid a bleak political future, it will make all-out efforts to mobilise the Hindus in the name of Lord Ram."

From such a stance there obviously can be no going back for the BJP. In the space of a few crucial months, religion has been dangerously foisted on the national agenda. And in the coming months it will become an integral part of political rhetoric. For the BJP which has finally unveiled its true colours, the future tack seems clearly drawn out.

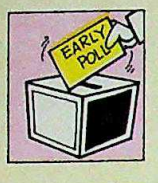
—PANKAJ PACHAURI

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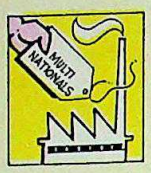
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AREAS OF CONFLICT

On major issues there's no meeting point



PUNJAB: Shekhar favours early polls, Congress(I) opposes them. He's keen on aligning with the Akalis, but they'll force him to keep a distance. If he persists, they are likely to react violently.



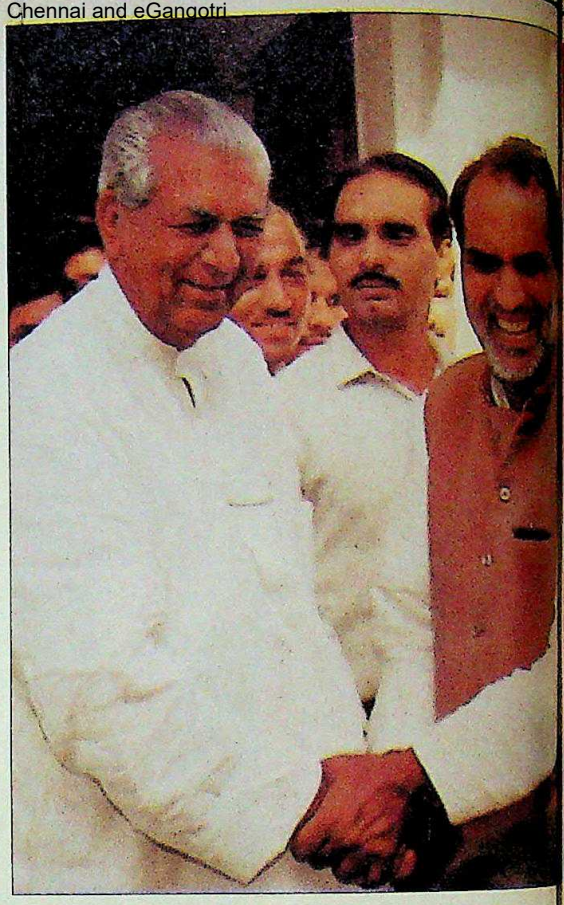
INDUSTRY: While Congress(I) is traditionally the party of industry and laissez-faire, Shekhar opposes multi-nationals and favours taxes on luxury items and controls on foreign trade.



RELATIONS WITH THE BJP AND THE LEFT: Shekhar will try to retain his anti-Congress(I) strain by involving them in national issues. But the Congress(I) might stop them from winning credit for any achievements.



TOP LEVEL APPOINTMENTS: The Congress(I) wants its favourite civil servants to be placed in key ministries so that it can rule through the back door. But the prime minister will want to install his own boys.



Chandra Shekhar and Devi Lal: uneasy tru

have summarily ditched Chandra Shekhar and come to them if Singh had withdrawn in Tau's favour.

It is not just Devi Lal that Shekhar has to contend with during what could turn out to be a rickety reign. For at least four factions are discernible within the Janata Dal(S). First there are the former socialists and Congressmen led by Chandra Shekhar himself, the Lok Dal faction led by Devi Lal, the backward caste segment led by Mulayam Singh Yadav and those like Subramaniam Swamy who have not allowed even a semblance of any ideology to cloud their political ambitions.

These factional rifts started showing even as the prime minister began thinking of drawing up his cabinet. The aspirants did not lobby in secret. They went about it openly with the most prominent among them even announcing the portfolios they would like to have in order to serve the country.

There was an open squabble for getting the finance portfolio. While Subramaniam Swamy made his claim for the ministry, Kamal Morarka announced that if Swamy was inducted as finance minister he would jump across to the V.P. Singh camp. The Devi Lal faction also made it known that their nominee Chand Ram would be allotted one of the key economic departments—commerce, industry or finance. The Devi Lal camp made a determined bid for the post of cabinet secretary as well. The deputy prime minister could continue making demands on the prime minister and even openly embarrass him like he did during the early days of the National Front government.

> The breakaway faction led by Chandra Shekhar is ridden by inherent contradictions.

THE COMING CONFLICTS

SENIOR Congress(I) leaders admit th the party organisation is in a terri shape and that ditching Chandr Shekhar precipitously could be politica ruinous for them. But they will face a number of compulsions to start dissociatin themselves from Shekhar's party in order t safeguard their own political image.

As the major ally of the Janata Dal group, the Congress(I) might have to fa embarrassment in Parliament: even Gad admits that it may not be possible for t Congress(I) to assail the new Government moves away from age-old Congress policies, which it invi ably will in its bid to prove its supremacy. Besides Rajiv and h party may also find it difficult to defend any murky deals t Shekhar Government may indulge in. The Congress(I) leade ship is also worried that, seen as the deliverer of Shekhar a Devi Lal, Rajiv's image might take a bashing.

The party is well aware of the dangers of such an alliance convenience, for there are possibilities of losing out comple and also being outmanoeuvred by the shrewd Chand Shekhar. And so the party has left a convenient escape roo open by not going in for a formal agreement with the Janat Dal(S). When the minimum programme of the alliance getting the election postponed—and other such details being worked out, a four-member committee headed Narasimha Rao and comprising Chimanbhai Patel, Sha

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SHEKHAR'S 'A' TEAM

There aren't many to choose from



YASHWANT SINHA: A former Indian Administrative Service officer from Bihar, urbane, articulate and the westernised face of the Government, will monitor the bureaucracy.



KAMAL MORARKA: An industrialist-turned-publisher-turned-politician; natty, shrewd and sophisticated. Will formulate the new business policy of the Government.



SUBRAMANIAM SWAMY: Harvard educated economist, a Janata Party left over, consumate back room schemer. Will serve mainly as the conduit to the Congress(I).



HUKUM NARAIN DEV YADAV: A former follower of Ram Manohar Lohia, a backward caste leader and a fiery speaker. Will counter the caste combine of Vishwanath Pratap Singh.

Pawar and Chandra Shekhar was constituted to formalise all that into a common action programme. When the details were about to be finalised, Rajiv, showing at last a sign of political foresight he has not always shown in the past, pulled out. He knew that with such a document it would not be easy to pull out of the alliance. So the committee once met for tea and conveniently forgot to sit together again. This was another clear indication if ever one was needed about the real intention of the Congress(I).

For Rajiv, it's going to be a long tightrope walk, as it is going to be for Chandra Shekhar. The legacies left behind by V.P. Singh are not going to be easy to handle: a resurgent Punjab, torn-up Kashmir, insolvable Mandal and the Babri Masjid-Ram Janmabhoomi issues. Congress(I) strategists are hoping that the unsavoury fallout from these issues will stick only to Shekhar while they buy time, provided to them by him during the interregnum, to bolster their own electoral prospects. But there is no certainty that the mud will not stick to the Congress(I).

There lies the catch: the Congress(I) can withdraw its support any time it pleases. And there are so many fundamental differences on which the two groups can fall out. Chandra Shekhar, for example, is firmly against multinational corporations making their headway into the Indian economy. These beliefs—for they can only be called that—will obviously be directly against those of the "forward-looking" Congress(I) led by Rajiv Gandhi.

Says Rajiv: "Chandra Shekhar is a former Congressman. We have agreed to work together." But the stand he had taken earlier on the Mandal Commission was ambiguous and could backfire in any unpredictable fashion on him and by extension on the Congress(I) if the report is scrapped or amended.

On the Babri Masjid-Ram Janmabhoomi issue, however, Shekhar seems heading towards a compromise with the BJP while the Congress(I) has taken a hardline anti-BJP position on this issue. It would be an act of political absurdity for the Congress(I) to go on backing Shekhar if he continues to recommend a dialogue with an intransigent BJP determined to continue on the Rath Yatra road.

MAJOR differences are likely to crop up on the handling of the Punjab issue. Shekhar has always condemned Operation Bluestar much to the chagrin and embarrassment of the Congress(I). He advocates a soft approach, the starting of a dialogue. The Congress(I) has a harder line, saying that elections must be postponed till terrorism is wiped out. These could be points of continuing irritation between him and Rajiv Gandhi.

And the final crunch may come on the economic front—uncontrollable inflation. Says a senior Congressman: "We will sit back and watch with amusement and make occasional noises till March. Just before the budget, we will begin to make a noise." Odds are that the Congress(I) will ditch the Government during the budget session beginning in February 1991, so that polls can be held in May, when the Congress(I) is confident of winning on its own.

For Chandra Shekhar the new-found friendship with the Congress(I) opens up possibilities of forging a formidable union of all former Congressmen barring Rajiv and V.P. Singh. And considering the links which he has with many of the Congressmen of his time and also the new bunch, Chandra Shekhar could attempt just that. His possible co-architects for the demolition and rebuilding job: chief ministers Chimanbhai Patel and Sharad Pawar.

> Odds are the Congress(I) will ditch the Government during the budget session so that polls can be held by May.

To Rajiv Gandhi, the Shekhar-Sharad-Chimanbhai troika could indeed turn out to be a Frankenstein. And that's not all. In this incredible game they are likely to rope in three other stalwarts—Biju Patnaik, Arun Nehru and Arif Mohammed Khan. Out of power, Nehru and Khan are capable of causing much mischief—this time for either Rajiv Gandhi or V.P. Singh. Nehru and Khan seem to have been trapped in a sort of political straitjacket, not really holding any trump cards at the moment. But neither Rajiv nor Singh can underestimate their abilities to sow seeds of doubts and then sit back and watch it grow. For the Congress(I) this scenario poses most danger.

Whether the final rift comes because of Shekhar's own internal party contradictions, over his desire to negotiate with the BJP, or bring together old Congressmen or over rising prices, the bottomline is that he is in the ring, and he will have a lot of fighting to do. Chances are that he will keep the Bofors inquiry alive as a tool to blackmail the Rajiv Gandhi camp, or, if the revelations are in anyway devastating, to use them as a knife even to split the Congress(I) and effect a merger with anti-Rajiv elements in his favour and thereby create a new majority in Parliament.

As he gets down to work, the eighth prime minister of India and the seventh from Uttar Pradesh will have to struggle to survive with very little to strengthen him and much to pull him down.

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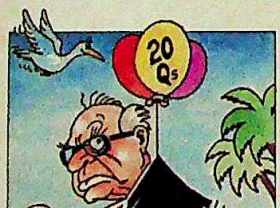
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A COMMUNIST COLOUR

COMMUNISM as an ideology may be losing much of its validity but for Indian politicians, communist terminology continues to remain a great temptation. No wonder then that a Janata Dal leader likened the defections from the party as a 'great purge' conjuring up the vision of Mao Tse Tung's move to rid the communist party in China of undesirable elements. The Congress(I), presumably, is giving its support to reactionary renegades and counter-revolutionary lickspittles.

Cartoons by AJIT NINAN and ANIL SHARMA





SUICIDAL STYLE

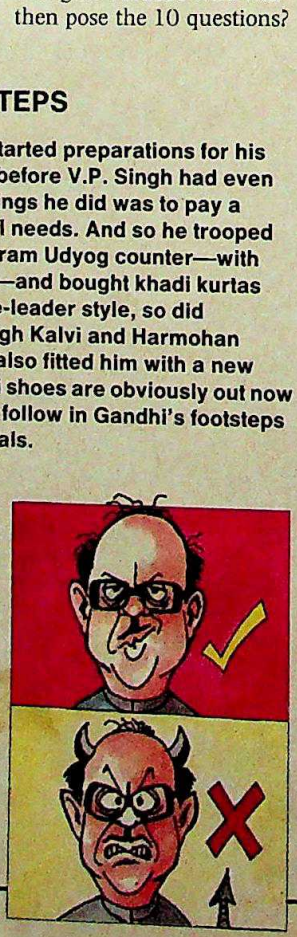
WHAT is of concern is whether Ram Jethmalani will carry out the threat he held out of committing suicide when asked how he felt about Chandra Shekhar becoming prime minister. But then he may now have second thoughts because who will then pose the 10 questions?

IN GANDHI'S FOOTSTEPS

CHANDRA Shekhar had started preparations for his swearing-in many days before V.P. Singh had even resigned. Among the first things he did was to pay a little attention to his sartorial needs. And so he trooped into Hotel Ashoka's Khadi Gram Udyog counter—with press photographers in tow—and bought khadi kurtas and dhotis. And in follow-the-leader style, so did Yashwant Sinha, Kalyan Singh Kalvi and Harmohan Dhawan. Shekhar's retinue also fitted him with a new pair of black chappals. Gucci shoes are obviously out now that Shekhar has decided to follow in Gandhi's footsteps and make do with the chappals.

NOT BAD AT ALL

A die-hard V.P. Singh supporter and former cabinet member who put up a stoic front when talking about the former prime minister's personal integrity had this comment to make: "His worst enemies could at best call him mad but not bad," he said with a deadpan expression.



OFFICERS' WAYS

ONE indication of the changed situation and the new equations that have developed in the corridors of power, is according to a Congress(I) leader, the increasing number of bureaucrats visiting him every morning. When asked since when they had started doing this the leader quipped: "Earlier they were coming in the evening."



ERRANT ENGLISH

NEVER one to compromise on his Jat abrasiveness Devi Lal let even Jayant Malhotra, his *carefree* businessman-supporter, have it when he rudely interrupted a conversation between Malhotra and Subramanian Swamy, who were conspiring in the king's English at a dissident meet. *"Ab aadmion ki tarah baat kar,"* (talk in a man's language) growled Lal.

LETTING IT GO

WHEN asked why he wasn't forming the Government, Rajiv Gandhi stunned the press with the reply: "Because Chandra Shekhar can provide a more viable and stable government." Adviser M.J. Akbar, crawled up to Gandhi to whisper a correction. Gandhi smiled, and said, "just let it go".



RETURN OF THE ELITE BRIGADE

THE day the Singh government lost the confidence vote, the Lok Sabha visitors' gallery repeatedly drew journalists' attention. A gloomy Sita Devi, Singh's wife, took her seat even before the House met and sat through the lengthy debate. But more than the unassuming Sita Devi, the attention was cornered by Sonia and Priyanka who came around 3 o'clock with other socialites from Delhi's cocktail circuits. The femmes fatales are back ever before the return of the native to the prime minister's cha

ASS-TRADING

OVERHEARD: Since most politicians are asses, the term for the wheeling-dealing they are indulging in should not be horse-trading, but ass-trading.



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FIVE-STAR WOOING

DURING the hectic horse-trading that preceded the ascent of Chandra Shekhar, the 11 MPs of the AIADMK received a royal five-star wooing. First they were closeted in the Ashoka Hotel with Chandra Shekhar campers working to ensure their loyalty. But fearing that a government hotel was not the right place for such activity they were packed off to the Holiday Inn owned by Lalit Suri.



THE WEDDING

AS the Nehru Brigade, a Congress(I) band, greeted Chandra Shekhar at his residence with brass melodies, it was like a wedding and a supporter asked: *"Par dulha kahan heh?"* (but where's the bridegroom?). Quickly came a reply: *"Yahan toh dulhan rehti heh"* (The bride lives here). The groom obviously stays at 10, Janpath (Rajiv Gandhi's residence).



BOOKING A BERTH

AT the end of Chandra Shekhar's press conference a voice piped up from behind: "One last question, Mr Chandra Shekhar. Can I get a berth in your Cabinet?" The journalists and photographers were amazed. But to their relief it was no one from the press corps but a party hanger-on from Andhra Pradesh. Chandra Shekhar was also on the button: "Yes, why not. Give me your name." The man's name was drowned in the ensuing guffaws.

PORTABLE PACKAGE

OVERHEARD: V.P. Singh had led a government that was collapsible. Chandra Shekhar leads a government that is portable.

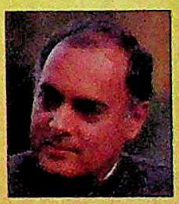


LAST WORDS

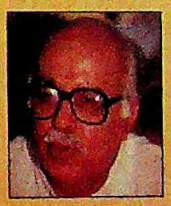
The November 7 special session of the Lok Sabha, convened to take up the confidence motion, witnessed fiery rhetoric and repartee. Excerpts from the speeches made on that day:



V.P. SINGH: A 25 horsepower engine will be on one side and a 190 horsepower one on the other. Now who will pull whom—190 will pull the 25 or 25 will pull 190? This is like a trailer moving behind a jeep.



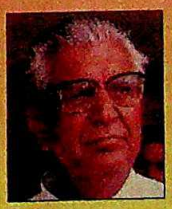
RAJIV GANDHI: Where was the prime minister when children were dying? There were almost 170 to 180 attempts of self-immolation. By deliberately dividing our society the Government provoked communalism.



L.K. ADVANI: In the last 11 months the prime minister has not been able to keep the country, the council of ministers and even his party together. What kind of team leadership is this? Can there be a greater failure?



CHANDRA SHEKHAR: I will request the prime minister that to run the Parliament is not like performing a drama. The question is not whether the jeep or trolley will move. If the driver is useless, neither can move.



DEVI LAL: The prime minister is so stuck to power that it's difficult to remove him. But to achieve it, he even deceived me. It's a habit with him. He has decieved all those sitting with me at some time or the other.

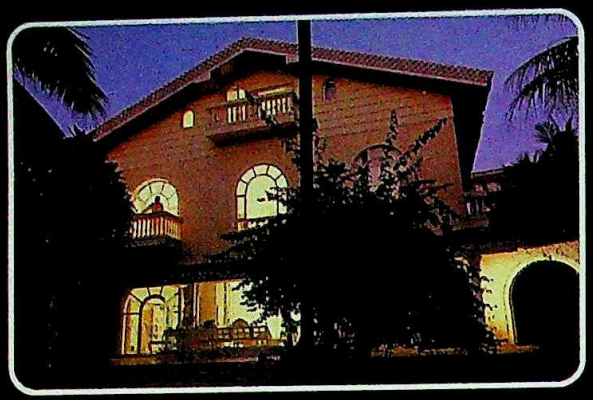


SOMNATH CHATTERJEE: It is not a question of the jeep, trolley or trawler. If Chandra Shekhar forms the next government, who'll be the driver? He may have the steering but who'll control the clutch and gears?

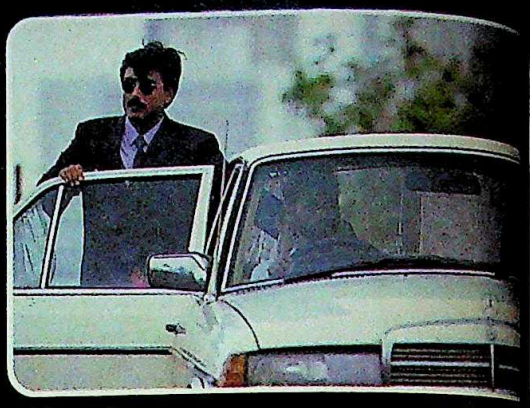


V.P. SINGH: This government is falling because it is not ready to violate the court order. It has been said that everything moves according to its driver's ability. The driver can be anybody but who owns the jeep is clear now.

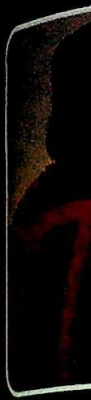
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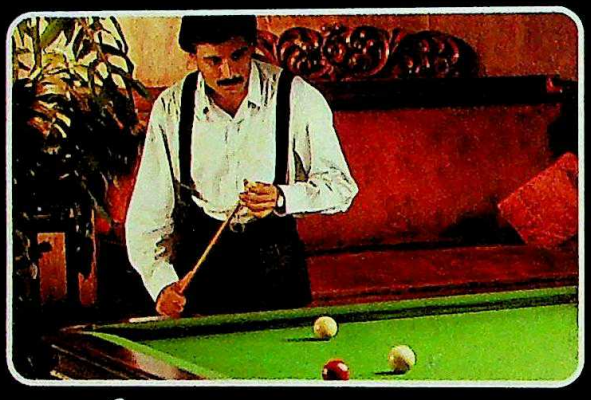
His House



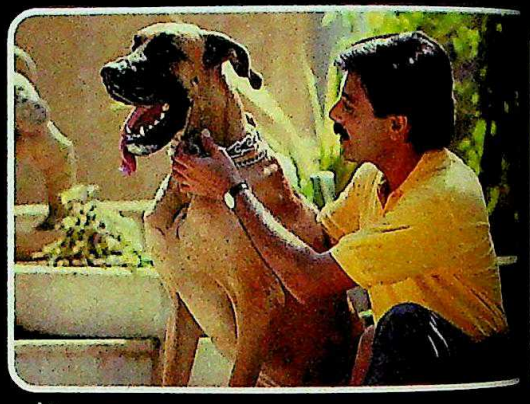
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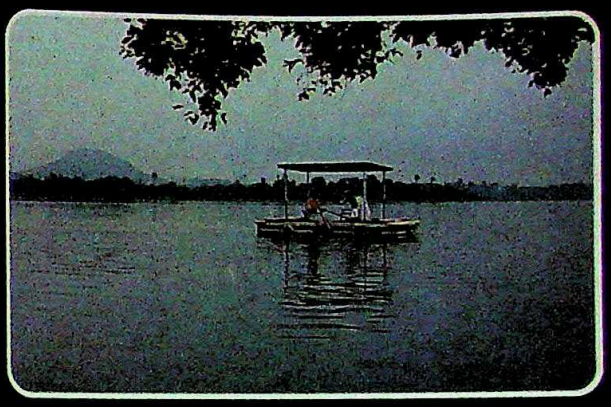


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CHANDRA SHEKHAR

A Chequered Career

By HARINDER BAWEJA

"PEOPLE are sick of the present state of politics. I would like to help fashion a new style of politics, of people politics."
—Chandra Shekhar, beginning his padyatra in 1983

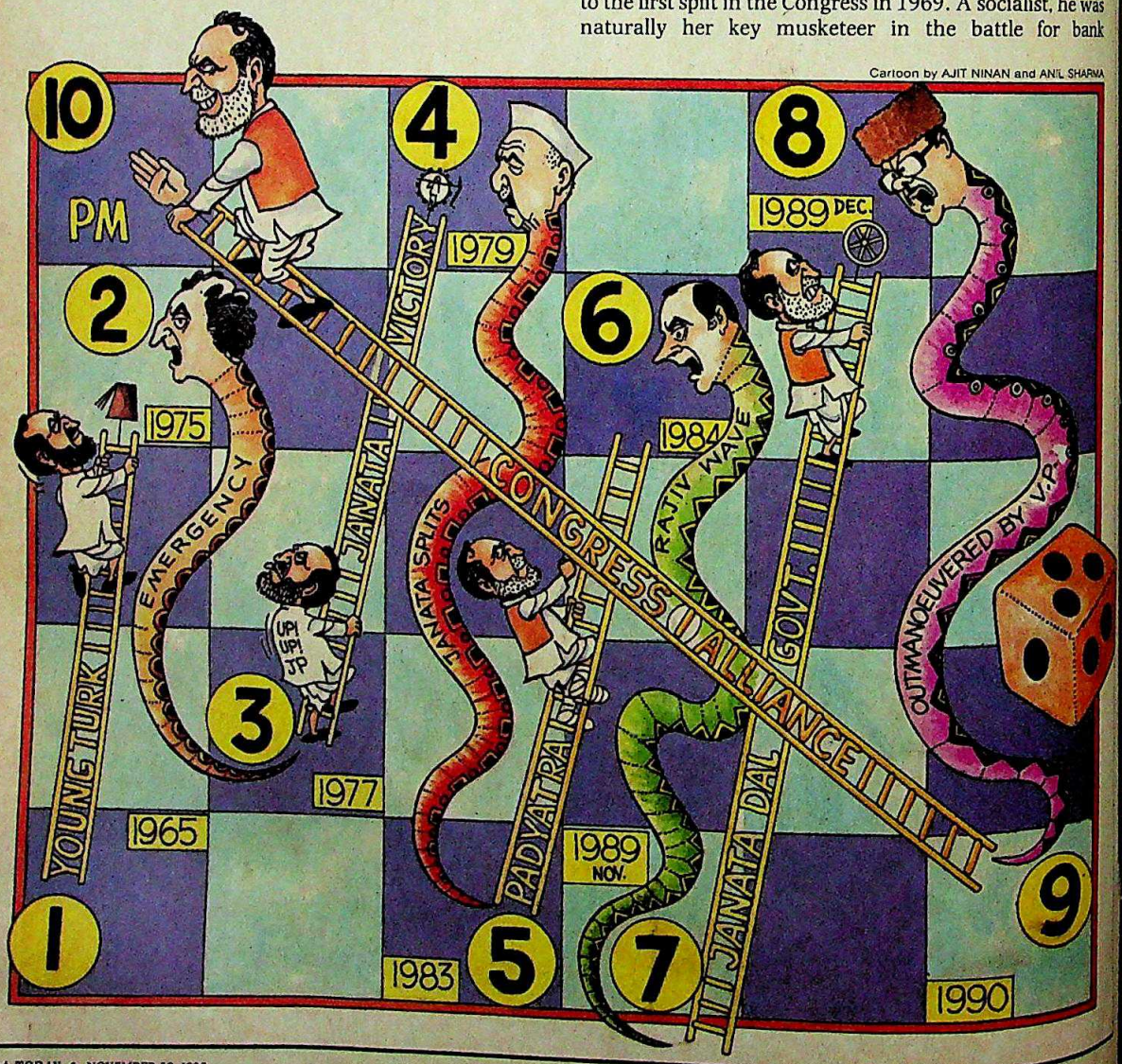
FROM Kanyakumari to Rajghat, he walked the 4,260 kilometres through the wilds and the ravines, through teeming towns and dusty countryside, the ranks of his followers swelling as each day went by during those heady six months of his padyatra in 1983. Three years after the ignominy of the Janata Party split, the former Young Turk was staging a come-back and many believed his brave words, the promise of a path-breaking, new approach to politics. But exigencies of realpolitik consumed the padyatri even before he had taken a few steps in that direction. Instead, he launched himself on a vicious slash-and-grab course that finally saw him installed as prime minister.

Ironically, this is his first public office ever in a three-decade political career that began as a firebrand Praja Socialist Party worker. The hallmark of his politics now is paradoxically the opposite of what he had set out to achieve in 1983. The path of his ascent to power at the head of no more than 60 followers in the Lok Sabha, is littered with the debris of parties to which he had professed loyalty.

The Young Turk of 1971—now wizened at 63—had tried similar methods before but always failed. This time his dissenting, destructive style helped him make it to 7, Race Course Road. Earlier, it only saw him flitting in and out of camps.

Chandra Shekhar's has been a chequered political career. But whether tantalisingly close to power or down in the dumps *"adhyakshji"* has always displayed an uncanny knack of staying on centre-stage. A master in the craft of backroom politics he has always used his gift of articulation and rebellious persona to good effect. He was in the forefront when it came to taking up cudgels on behalf of Indira Gandhi when she was fighting the bosses of the Syndicate which led to the first split in the Congress in 1969. A socialist, he was naturally her key musketeer in the battle for bank

Cartoon by AJIT NINAN and ANIL SHARMA



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nationalisation and abolition of privy purses. But just when she was seeing him as reliable he issued her a public warning in 1971 for deviating from 'people politics'. To further humiliate her, he, against her wishes, got himself elected to the central election committee at the AICC session in Simla in 1971, and again in 1972, he had himself re-elected to the Congress Working Committee. The Young Turk of 1971 let down his mentor. The veteran of 1990 pulled the rug from under V.P. Singh's feet.

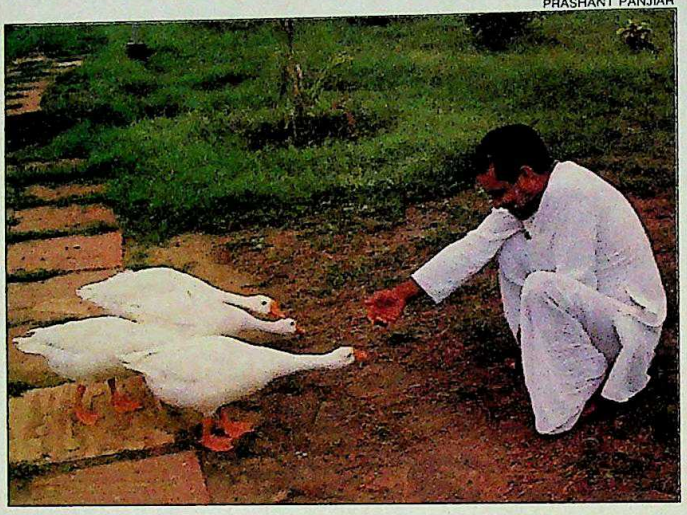
"I don't accept V.P. Singh as my leader but I will not wreck the party," Chandra Shekhar said ever so often, the words must have sounded hollow even to his own ears. He sulked, he waited. He hit out and withdrew. One moment he supported V.P. Singh, the other he talked of him scornfully. He perfected his own brand of thrust and parry politics till he saw the opportunity for a coup de grace. He never lost a chance to embarrass V.P. Singh, whether it was over Meham, when he refused to condemn Chautala saying he had the majority support of legislators. Or when he created a stir by saying that his telephone was being tapped by the V.P. Singh government.

To many the man is today known as a bit of a loner with a few but extremely loyal friends. Witness Yashwant Sinha stoutly turning down offers of a cabinet post. "Chandra Shekhar is a perfectionist, an idealist. And he is an untried leader. He is the real Mr Clean," Sinha says.

Yet at a popular level, so isolated is the man and so devoid of friends, that there are only a handful who recall Chandra Shekhar as the spirited spearhead of the Praja Socialist Party, the idealist who rebelled against the rot in the Congress, and languished in jail for his leader JP, tirelessly trying to fight injustice and take up the cause of the downtrodden.

Chandra Shekhar: reaching the top

PRASHANT PANJIAR



The revolutionary of the '70s, the crusader, the progressive socialist who went on the warpath with the Birlas, is today known to have a close association with the Ambanis. Baba Bhondsi is what he is today popularly called in a caustic reference to his designer farmhouse on the outskirts of Delhi.

But so heavy is the baggage of betrayal and distrust that he has collected in his ascent to power, so much has he lost by way of credibility and so incredibly contradictory is the alliance that brought him to prime ministership that Chandra Shekhar could indeed find himself struggling against hopeless odds—and a bit lonely at the top.

INTERVIEW

"Stability depends on performance"

CHANDRA Shekhar, 63, the wizened old Turk has finally achieved what he'd always wanted—the prime minister's post. Surrounded earlier by a handful of supporters, he now has the SPG standing in attendance, guards saluting him at South Block and hordes of people waiting to see him. And he looks a bit dazed, surprised that he's actually made it. The shrewd politician in him, however, soon takes over as he answers questions in an interview with Senior Correspondent HARINDER BAWEJA, *his first as prime minister, a few hours after his swearing-in. Excerpts:*

Q. Is it like a dream come true?

A. I feel nothing special. In fact there is an added sense of responsibility because there are so many problems to be tackled. I don't know how you presumed that becoming prime minister was my dream. I never thought I would become the prime minister, specially not at this time. And the dream of my life cannot be fulfilled by just becoming prime minister.

Q. What is the dream of your life?

A. It is hypocritical to talk of dreams.

Q. With just 60 MPs can you provide a stable government?

A. It's not that complicated. Stability is dependent on the efficiency and performance of the Government. And stability is directly related to the satisfaction of the people.

Q. But yours is a government without a mandate. Haven't you been unethical?

A. Depends on the standards of ethics. A mandate is not a ready-made formula for success. What did V.P. Singh do with the mandate he got? As I said earlier, the Government's functioning will determine public support.

Q. So will you be introducing some populist measures?

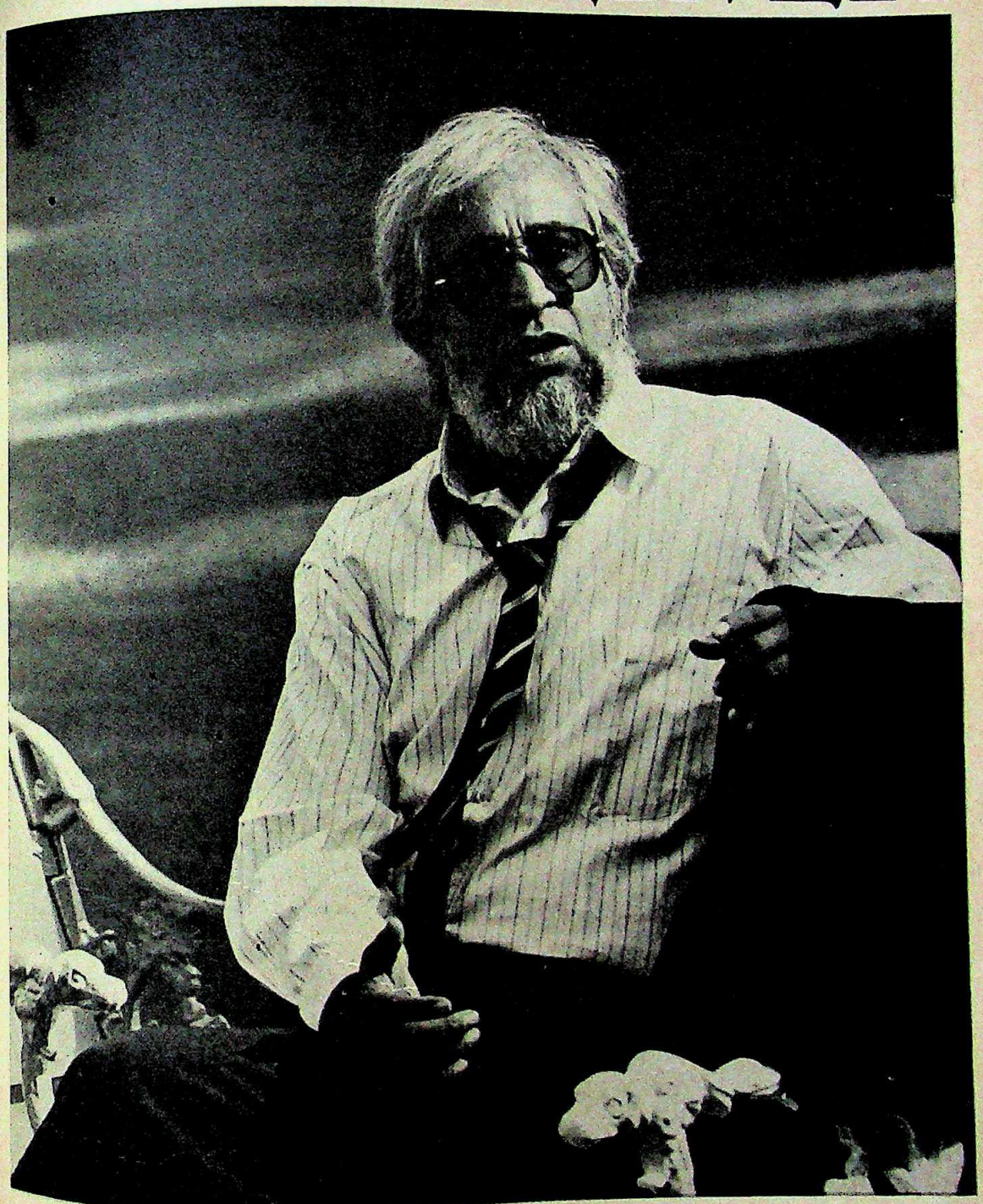
A. If populist measures had worked, the previous government would not have gone. I believe that the hardships should be squarely indicated to the people. We have to convey to the people that hard decisions will be taken. The people have to be taken into confidence.

> The Congress(I) and I have agreed to work together to retrieve the mess. Is it immoral to think of the country?

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Any attempt at giving populist measures will fail.

Q. Haven't you been immoral in taking the Congress(I)'s support?

A. If V.P. Singh forms the Government with the help of the BJP, it is a patriotic endeavour but if the Congress(I) helps me, it becomes a great act of betrayal. The Congress(I) and I have agreed to work together to retrieve the situation in which the nation has been landed. Is it immoral to think of the country at a time when it is passing through a crisis?

Q. You are being supported by Rajiv Gandhi, a person whom you described as a child in politics....

A. Are we characterising Mr Gandhi or are we trying to save the nation now?

Q. Aren't you uncomfortable about the thought that the Congress(I) can withdraw support any time it pleases?

A. Why should I be uncomfortable? I was more uncomfortable with the chaotic state that the nation was in. And if they do withdraw support tomorrow, the country won't be any worse than it is today.

Q. You repeatedly said that you will never wreck the Government or the party.

A. Have I wrecked the Government? V.P. Singh destroyed his own government. Was it by any chance possible to save the Government from falling? Would the Government have been saved even if we all had voted for V.P. Singh? What are V.P. Singh's moral values—that if he is not there nobody else should be there. What did I do to destroy him? On every question I told him not to do what he was doing. I didn't tell him to play tricks with the VHP and the BJP. Did I advise Advani to withdraw support? Can V.P. Singh tell us why he withdrew the ordinance after telling Advani that he would participate in the kar sewa?

Q. How can you trust Devi Lal?

A. Nobody lets me down. If anybody has tried, he has been let down. I don't put myself in a position where anyone can let me down. I have never allowed that. Whether Devi Lal let me down or he let V.P. Singh down is for you to judge.

Q. How do you plan to resolve the Ram Janmabhoomi-Babri Masjid imbroglio?

A. We will try for a mutual understanding. No one-sided decision is possible, on this score I am very clear. And I don't believe that you can solve such problems by being smart. Neither can we ignore Hindu sentiments nor brush aside the apprehensions of the minority community.

Q. But what will you do if the BJP is as adamant in its stand on the construction of the temple?

A. Well, my Government's survival is not dependent on the BJP's support *(laughs)*. If they are adamant, I will also be hard. Politics is a game of reciprocity. I shall try and reach them in all humility, but if they are rigid the unavoidable will have to happen. I think the BJP also realises that.

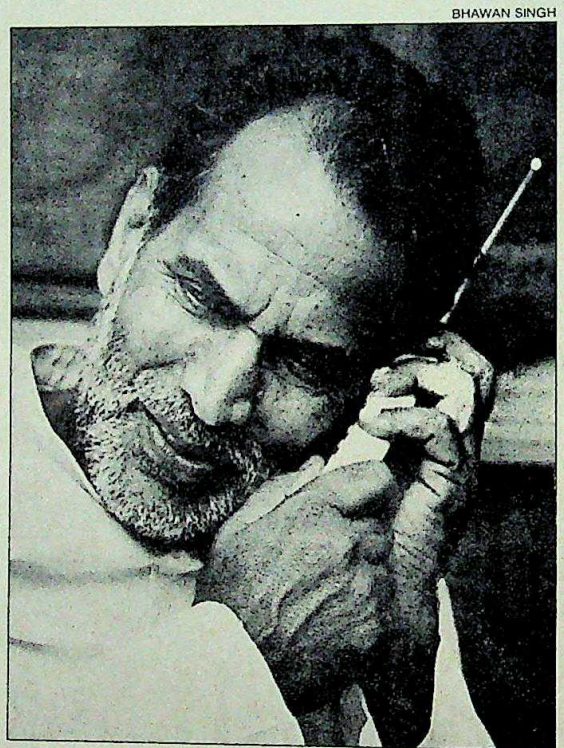
Q. What about the Mandal Commission report? Will you go ahead with its implementation?

A. Reservation is a correct step. To deny reservation on the basis of caste is to deny reality. But lopsided as the economic development in our country has been, the economically backward sections have also to be considered and I had said this to V.P. Singh too. In that sense, Mandal is incomplete.

Q. Don't you foresee areas of tension between you and the Congress(I)?

A. Things are in such a bad way that we should try and find areas of agreement. The Congress(I) realises this as much as we, the Janata Dal(S), recognise it. Whether or not there will be tension between us in the next 10 years or two years I can't say but I see no tension between us in the near future. As for Punjab, I too say that terrorism should be contained. We may have a difference of approach but I'm sure the Congress(I) won't object if I say soft methods should be used.

BHAWAN SINGH



Vishwanath Pratap Singh destroyed his own government. What did I do? Did I tell him to play tricks with the BJP?

Q. Will you negotiate with the terrorists?

A. If they are ready for negotiations, so am I. Negotiations cannot be one-sided.

Q. Will we be seeing the return of Farooq Abdullah?

A. At the moment there is no immediate possibility of that since there is no possibility of elections.

Q. What will you do to control prices?

A. The situation is very bad on that front. It's a very complicated issue and I would not like to say anything on that right now.

Q. Is it a problem that baffles you as well?

A. It doesn't baffle me but it is an issue of great concern. Something effective will have to be done, for we cannot live with the existent level of inflation. Those who try and manipulate prices will be warned. I can understand compulsions but manipulations will not be tolerated.

Q. What'll be your foreign policy?

A. Not trying to humiliate smaller nations or bowing before bigger nations. I will strive for improved relations with our neighbours, for the Third World cannot afford confrontation. My appeal to all our neighbours is to forget the bitterness of the past.

Q. You have the reputation of being a wrecker?

A. In whose eyes? In the eyes of flatterers of power. I wreck only those who try and wreck the nation *(smiles)*. And those who are enemies of the people.

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NON-CONGRESS GOVERNMENTS

Why Do They Fall Apart?



1967, 1979, 1990.... Why is it that non-Congress governments come apart, and that too so soon?

The first thing to notice is that not all non-Congress governments do: the CPI(M)-led coalition in West Bengal, the DMK in Tamil Nadu, the BJP governments where they are on their own....

That fact helps make the question more specific: What is it that makes the non-Congress governments at the Centre and in states like Uttar Pradesh and Bihar fall apart?

And the answer in brief is: these governments have in them a character-type, more specifically the type that gravitated to and was spawned by the erstwhile socialist parties and the erstwhile Lok Dal. This type, far from getting on with others, cannot get on with itself. Any party, indeed any organisation, which includes persons of this type, *a fortiori* if the core of that party or organisation consists of persons of this type, will splinter as certainly as the original socialist and Lok Dal parties did. And it will go on splintering.

What is this type?

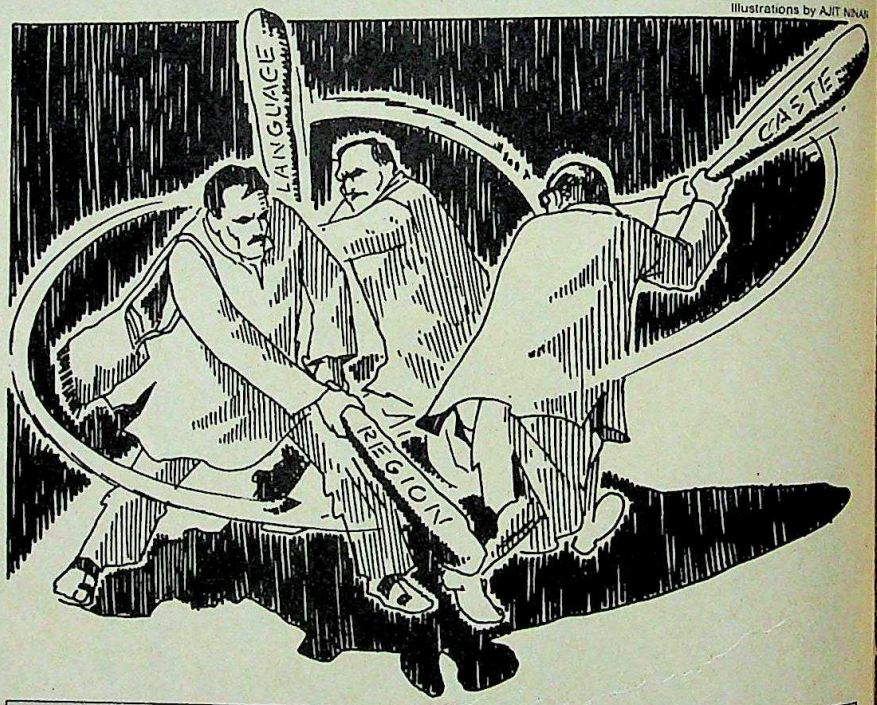
SECTIONAL

It espouses sectional demands—of caste, language, region, of this occupational group or that. There is ideology of sorts in championing these demands—Hindi, reservations for this caste or that, all these are seen as things that would benefit the poor, indeed as *the* things that would benefit the poor. But more than ideology, there is cold calculation—the premise that it is by advocating concessions which will benefit a particular section that one can get them to follow one, and the further premise that it is by gathering followers from different sections—those who think they will benefit when English is abolished, the ones who will get reservations—that one acquires a following large enough to make it in the elections.

The outcome of successive elections belies both presumptions—the sections start quarrelling among themselves; the electorate, certainly in national elections, votes across region, caste, language, the rural-urban divide, it votes on one or two national issues. But the type is impervious to experience. Indeed, as we shall see in a moment, failure fortifies persons of this type in their presumptions. In fact, in their presumptuousness.

It isn't just that the demands they champion are sectional. It is that they champion them in a most divisive manner—it is always this caste *as against* that caste, Hindi *as against* English, farmers *as against* others. The hangover of what has failed everywhere—Marxism—is at the back of this of course. But there are also the paucity of imagination, and the fact of not having done anything in practice. Either would educate one to see that many diverse sects can benefit by working together, in fact that doing so is the only way they can. But, no, to this type everything is zero-sum: what one gains, the other must necessarily lose. Hence, the championing is always of one *against* the others.

Illustrations by AJIT NINAN



The type espouses sectional demands of caste, language, region and far from getting on with others, cannot get on with itself.

DEVICES AS PRINCIPLES

The issues are stoked largely as devices to acquire office. But the pursuit of office is a thing the type looks down upon. This ambivalence has several consequences.

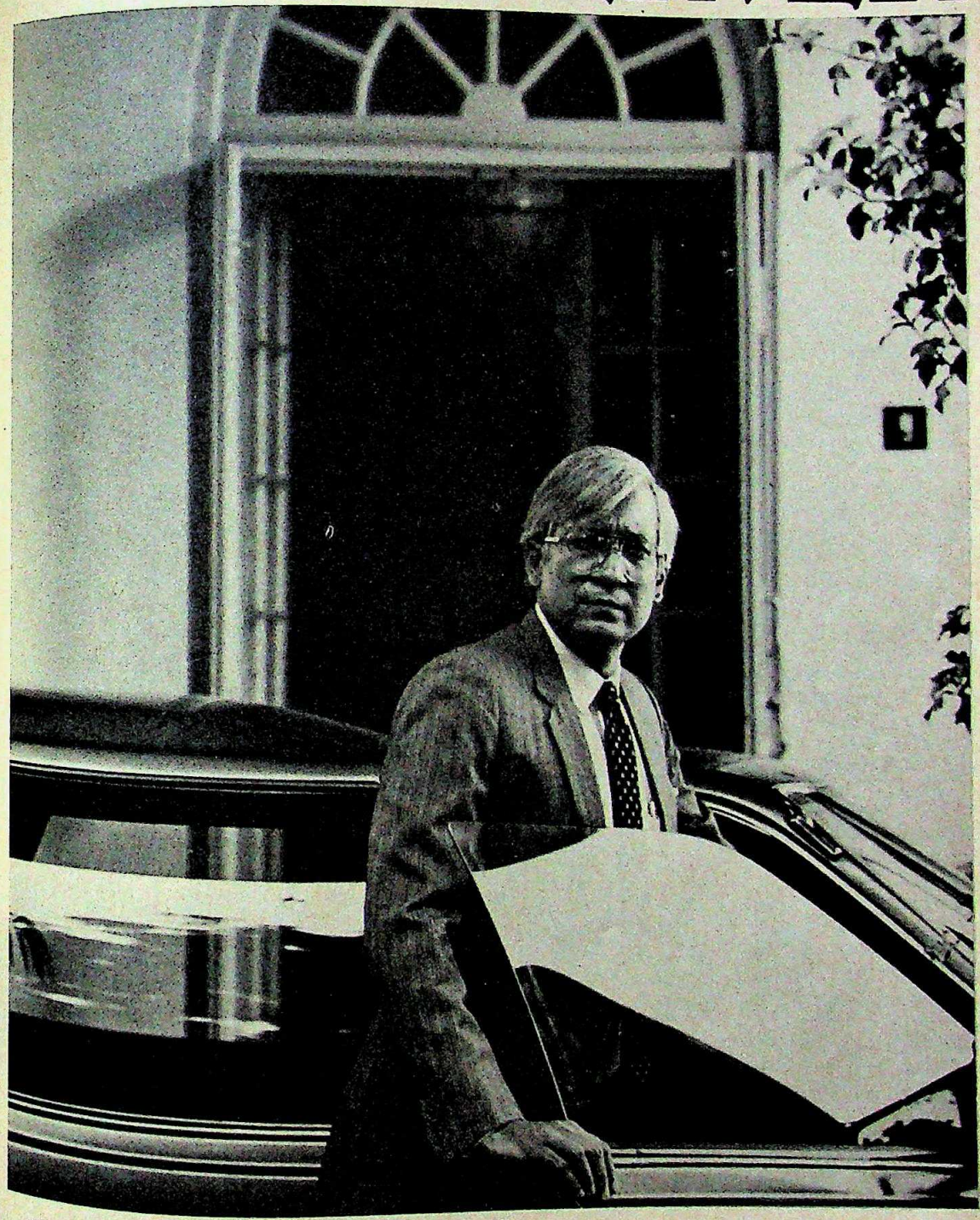
The issues are projected—and by the person of the type himself, his particular issue is seen—as principle. The more the issue is a device the more vehemently it is projected as, and believed by the person to be, principle.

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Hence, it is pressed in season and out: a meeting has but to commence, and the subject may be esoteric as can be, and one of these fellows will butt in and demand that the proceedings be in Hindi. Moreover, as the issue has been projected as principle, and is believed by the person to *be* principle, he cannot countenance compromise.

Consequently the splintering goes on and on. The farther the group is from office, and but for the briefest of spasms the type does remain far from office, the more intense is the search for purity, the more esoteric the ground for splintering.



THE issue is an instrument, *not* principle—the ones who broke the Janata Party, not once but twice, on the question of the "dual membership" of the then Jan Sangh lot, the very persons were to say later that it was not a real issue at all. It is but a device to put the other on the defensive, to score an advantage for oneself or one's faction. But having projected the issue as principle, having made oneself believe at that moment that it *is* principle, the type cannot agree to dilution.

NO LIMITS

It is not just his recent vehemence, not just his conviction of the moment that makes the type so insistent. It is that, the group having splintered into sects and sub-sects, the peer group in which such a type moves is minuscule. This makes it that much more intense, and also enhances the dread of the member of being cast out of even this narrow band, of the only world he is left with. And *within* this narrow circle the issue is just as much of a device, now for intra-circle jostling. All are on the look-out to see who has "sold out". The resulting hunt for those who have "fallen" compels the person once in office to insist that everyone act the slogans.

As the issue is principle, as he is perpetually under the dread that he too may be charged with having sold out, the issue is pressed by *all means*, and *without any notion of restraints, of limits.*

We bemoan the "Congress culture" but it had an important element of inclusiveness in it.

And so every disagreement—most often a theological one, a disagreement over whether the devil is green or yellow as Lenin would say—becomes total war. Slander, machinations, alliances with anyone and everyone to finish the other fellow off are the stock in trade.

All this entails perpetual fights, as well as perpetually shifting alliances. Each round also leaves a residue of bitterness and suspicion.

And this hostility and intense suspicion, this memory of wrongs done to one long ago, the expectation that, as such is the character of the other fellow, the person one is *per force* now allying with once again, that he will again stab one given half a chance—this is what forms the starting point of each fresh alliance. Can the *denouement* then be either different or distant?

The intense bitterness of these past feuds, as well as the extreme narrowness of the circle entail that at all times the one the person is most preoccupied with—his principal enemy—is not the one in the other group, but the one in his own little sub-sect: recall how these opposition leaders have throughout been more concerned with thwarting other opposition leaders than in worsting an Indira Gandhi or a Rajiv.

HIGH OFFICE

The ambivalence to office—the intense longing for it, Charan Singh's "life's ambition", but also the guilt at aspiring to and, God forbid, acquiring it—has other roots also, and other consequences too.

The type is anti-authority. This is the good in it. Because of this trait the type resists an Emergency. But by the same trait it finds *all* office, *all* authority disreputable, indeed repugnant. Few lap up the perquisites of office as voraciously as a person of this type does when he acquires it, but how hard he tries to convince you, and even more himself, that he doesn't care for it! The slovenly dress, the self-conscious, the demonstrative disdain for time and form and routine....

This slovenliness, indeed uncouthness is an article of faith with the type. It is a cover, of course, a defensive cover: for instance, the person is rude to the civil servant to cover the fact that he—now suddenly a minister—does not have the knowledge or experience to run a ministry. But the man looks upon the uncouthness too as principle, as the thing that certifies to his "authenticity", the thing that makes him one with the masses. Indeed he is disdainful and uncivil *on their behalf*: thus in his mind in putting down the civil servant he is only asserting the primacy of the people over the bureaucrat!

The consequences for governance are immediate. You have just to see how within a month of assuming office the Mulayam Singh Ministry so alienated the bureaucracy that the latter recoiled from doing any work.

The slovenliness and incivility transcend individuals. It is with the type an ideology: a repudiation of standards *per se*, of norms, a denunciation of excellence, indeed of all striving as elitist.

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Charan Singh, Raj Narain, Devi Lal, Mulayam Singh, Chandra Shekhar, and of course Ram Manohar Lohia and his political progeny...the type to the dot.

From every point of view, therefore, the Mandal decision was quintessence: in the nature of the cause it espoused, in the way it sought to mobilise a vote bank, and in the extremism, the total, cruel insensitivity with which it was rammed.

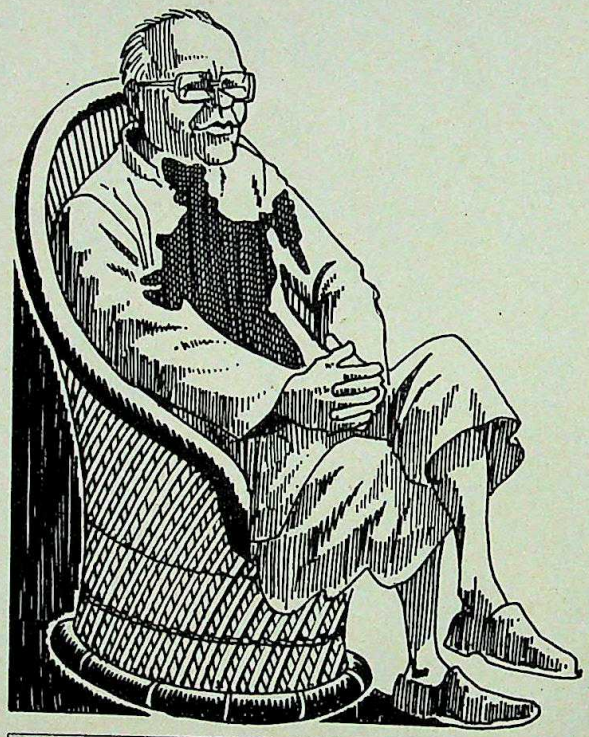
THE consequences for governance are compounded by two other features. In part because of the traits listed here, many of these persons have little executive experience. While it may be other things too, a department, a ministry, to say nothing of the Government of India, is an executive organisation. But this type has never run any executive organisation: Chandra Shekhar's first executive job is as prime minister!

Moreover, the thinking of the type is derivative. Marxism-by-hearsay, slogans from Lohia, the *realpolitik* of Meerut in Charan Singh's case, of Haryana in Devi Lal's.... The world has changed. Our needs have. Our opportunities have. But incapable of thinking for itself the type is stuck with the old slogans: "The draft industrial policy will sell the country to multinationals" (as if they are queuing up to come here), "No, we will never borrow from the IMF" (why are we members of it if we won't borrow from it when we need to?)....

When they are out of office they use these obsolete slogans to stall others—witness how Chandra Shekhar's denunciation of the draft industrial policy, which he had clearly not read, frightened the Government from finalising it, and contrast the paralysis such stalling induced in India with what the whole of East Europe was doing over those precise months on that precise question. When in office, they are stuck with the rocks they hurled at others.

SPOILT BY FAILURE

There is another element: while others are spoilt by success, this type has been spoilt over the years by failure. He does not believe he will make it: he sees himself as one who is fated to be eternally misunderstood, whose talents and commitment society is never going to be wise enough to recognise. When by happenstance he *does* make it to high-office, he is certain it will not last. And so, from day one, he is on the look-out for signs of being spurned, for signs of his colleagues selling out and therefore of it not being worthwhile to continue the arrangement, he is on the look-out from the very beginning for signs that things are in fact cracking up.



The break up of the Government is validation for the type: it confirms him as the tragic hero.

Convinced that the arrangement won't hold, he acts to go out a martyr to one of those "principles".

For us the falling asunder of the Government is another failure. But for the type it is validation: for it confirms him in the self-image of the tragic hero, of the one who is destined to remain unrecognised, as the singular one who shall stick by the issue come what may.

That the Government is in the event lost to an Indira Gandhi in 1979 or a Rajiv in 1990 is also not that consequential for the type. The important thing for him is that he has thwarted the ambition of another of his type, and that he has reaffirmed his purity in the eyes of his little circle.

ALAS, FOR THE MAN...

There is more of course to the type. In many to a pathological degree: the egos of Charan Singh and Devi Lal, the hatred that consumes so many of them—hatred of society which does not recognise their pristine adherence to principle, of others, specially their peers, in the Opposition because of whom office eludes them....all this has easily foreseeable consequences for public life.

The point is evident. We bemoan, and most justly, the "Congress culture"—its sycophancy, its lack of scruple, and much else. That is because we see it in its degenerate form. But there was an element in it—in its original form—which was important: an inclusiveness. The Congress too used to garner followers by taking up demands which were specific to them. But as it was a hold-all, as many groups contended within it no sectional demand was pushed beyond a point. All that went with Mrs Gandhi's hacking. And with progressive myopia: the organisation came to foment sectional demands—through Bhindranwale, GNLF, Bodos—to inconvenience its opponents, demands that it could not then control. But in its original form that inclusiveness, and that notion of limits were what our diverse society needed. The exclusiveness of the non-Congress splinters is what gets them. And it gets government whenever they get it.

Alas, for the one who will see our people as one, who will see that they respond to the man—to Panditji, to JP—who sees them as one, who assesses each issue with one touchstone alone, that of the country as a whole, who differentiates the true principle from the contrived one, who is tempered by a sense of possibilities....

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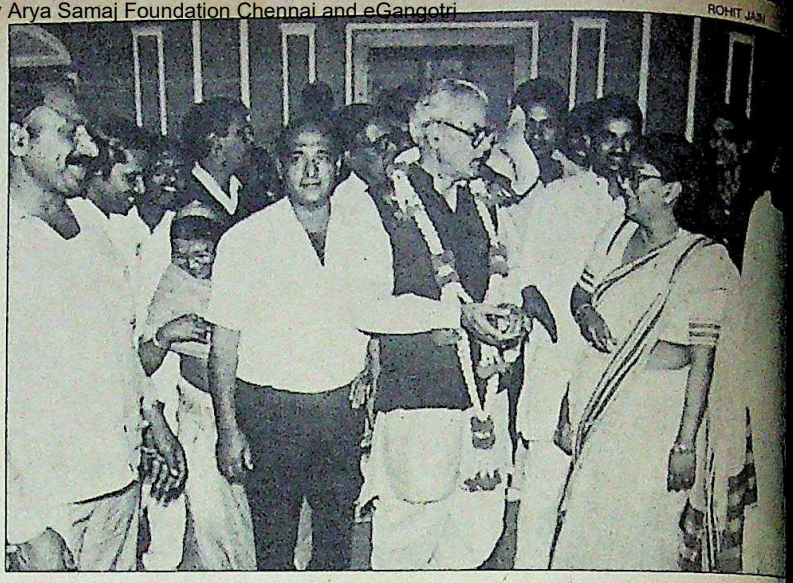
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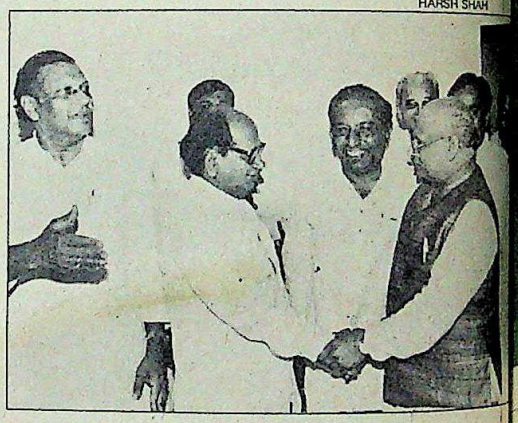
THE STATES

Suffering the Tremors

Crises at centre have rocked four state governments.



ROHIT JAIN



HARSH SHAH

Shekhawat with BJP MLAs (above); and (right) Chimanbhai with H.K.L. Bhagat: new alignments

WHILE the Janata Dal-led government at the Centre had looked vulnerable from the beginning, the newly-installed governments in some of the states had looked stable enough. But now with a split in the Janata Dal, the breakaway group of Chandra Shekhar accepting the bear-hug from the Congress(I), and the BJP distancing itself from its former ally, the ministries in Gujarat, Bihar, Haryana, and Rajasthan are virtually on the brink of collapse.

Frantic political activity and machiavellian tactics are afoot as the chief ministers try to save their chairs in the face of toppling bids by their detractors. The prospect of instability and new political configurations looms large in most states where there is a Janata Dal government.

There has been no mass exodus in Gujarat, ruled by Chimanbhai Patel. He is himself a 'master toppler', an epithet he earned in 1974 for having replaced Ghanshyam Oza as chief minister by engineering defections. Whatever little there has been, however, will still have a bearing on the future of the chief minister.

The Janata Dal chief minister was at his intriguing best last fortnight. He managed to secure the support of the Congress(I) and pulled through the crisis created by his party's decision to distance itself from the BJP and make the BJP ministers in the state cabinet resign. He accomplished it by pretending that the party leadership in Delhi had backed the move—a claim which was entirely untrue.

Later, when he was in Delhi, lobbying for Chandra Shekhar, came the news that some of his cabinet colleagues were ready to desert him. Chimanbhai dashed back to Ahmedabad to prevent his flock from being taken away. And to strengthen his position, he inducted six ministers in his cabinet including former chief minister Babubhai Jashbhai Patel, an independent who won with the support of both the Janata Dal and BJP.

Taking cognisance of Patel's rebellious actions, Janata Dal President S.R. Bommai expelled him from the party. Even then the number of dissident MLAs is not more than five, including former IPS officer Jaspal Singh and V.P. Singh-loyalist Pravinsinh Jadeja. Nonetheless, he feels vulnerable as he is at the mercy of the Congress(I).

So the wily tactician is said to be ready to move over and join the Congress(I) lock, stock and barrel a la Sharad Pawar. But Patel's chameleon-like postures and lust for power may prove to be his nemesis as the BJP is thinking of launching a Navnirman-type agitation to dislodge him with the help of students.

In Bihar, Chief Minister Laloo Prasad Yadav, who has sided with V.P. Singh in the recent battle of wits, has in right earnest initiated moves to safeguard his government. Believing in the maxim 'offence is the best form of defence', Yadav ensured that 10 MLAs, including Raghunath Jha, the number two in his cabinet, and the Dhanbad don, Suryadeo Singh were expelled from the Janata Dal.

Jha had obtained signatures of 51 MLAs favouring V.P. Singh's ouster, and, by implication, of Yadav's too. Now at least 60 dissident MLAs in a legislative party of 122 are ready to walk away. That will mean curtains for Yadav as the Congress(I) with 71 legislators is ready to shoot its arrows

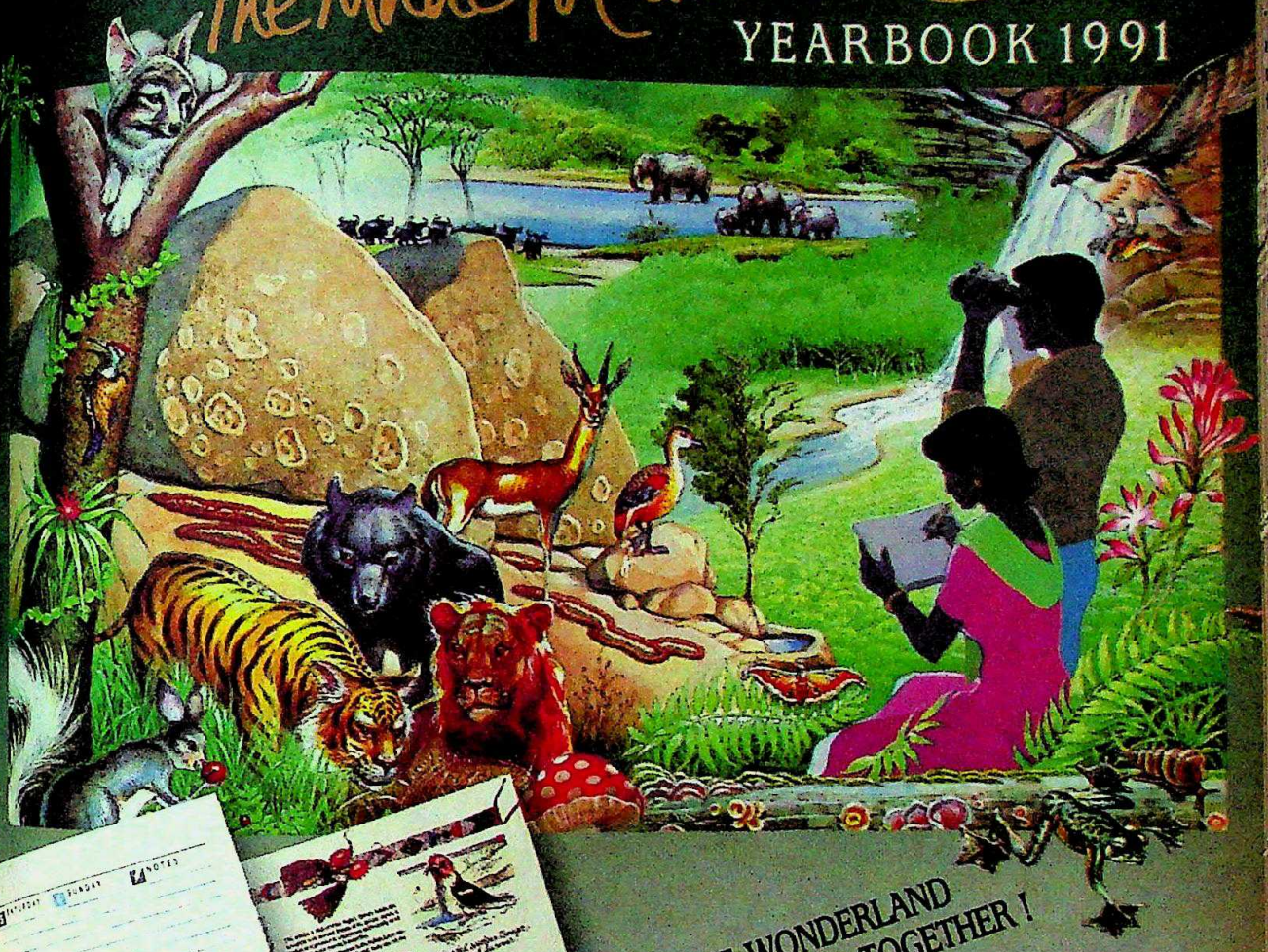
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at him and the BJP has already withdrawn its support to him. Only the left parties and the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha with 30 and 19 MLAs respectively, have stood by him.

Much will depend on the attitude of strongman Ram Sundar Das, whom Yadav had defeated in the contest for the legislative party's leadership. Das has said that he was loyal only to the party and not to any individual. Thus, despite Yadav's brave words of having weeded out dissidence, he is in a soup. "His days are numbered," said Laxmi Sahu, the Bihar Lok Dal general secretary.

In Haryana, it is certain that Hukam Singh will be asked to vacate the chief minister's chair which he had kept warm for Om Prakash Chautala. A mild flutter though was caused by Bommai when he revoked the suspension of eight Janhit Morcha legislators who were expelled from the Janata Dal for revolting against Chautala.

Meanwhile, the Devi Lal-Chautala group in the Assembly, emboldened by the Tau's reinstallation as the deputy prime minister, have decided to align themselves with the newly-formed Janata Dal (Socialist). In an effective House of 86, Janata Dal has 56 members. Of these, 18 are considered to be dissidents. But now that Chautala will get the support of five Congress(I) MLAs, he is tipped to start another reign in the state.

The scenario in BJP-ruled Rajasthan is somewhat more bizarre with another survivor of the crisis, Bhairon Singh Shekhawat, firmly ensconced in the chief minister's chair even after the Janata Dal walked out of the coalition. Interestingly, the Chandra Shekhar faction which in Delhi was romancing with the Congress(I), in Rajasthan chivalrously saved the damsel in distress, the Shekhawat Ministry. Led by Digvijay Singh, the faction—which has a current strength of 22 MLAs—voted in favour when Shekhawat sought a vote of confidence in the Assembly. Even some camp-followers of V.P. Singh and Ajit Singh are now propping up the BJP Government.

Shekhawat is willing to reward his new-found friends. He has secured the resignation letters of all his ministers and a cabinet reshuffle is on the cards. Shekhawat has obviously won this round. But all in all his future, as well as that of the other chief ministers, has become critically fragile with the sundering of the party at the Centre.

—FARZAND AHMED and UDAY MAHURKAR

The First Victim

INSIDE EYE BY INDERJIT BADHWAR

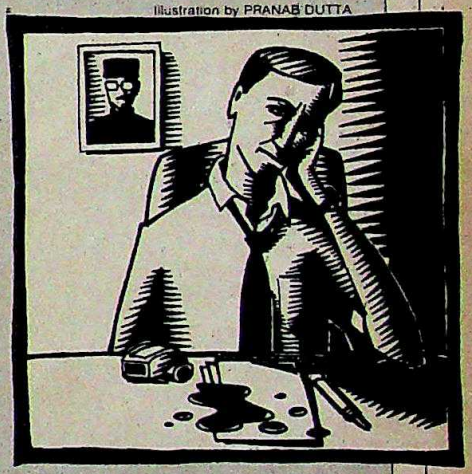
FOR the last several months as political pundits and superanalysts speculated furiously about whether Vishwanath Pratap Singh was losing his grip on his government, they need have looked no farther than his cabinet secretary. Vinod Pande mirrored Singh's triumphs and defeats.

A cabinet secretary is the bureaucracy's presiding deity. He is the enforcer of all cabinet decisions. He is the head of the civil service's senior think-tank responsible, also, for forcefully presenting major policy options before the political leadership.

His authority stems not just from law but also from his own administrative capabilities and integrity. Pande possessed both in ample measure. Earthy, yet intellectual, and plain-spoken to the point that he appeared to suffer from a terminal case of candour, Pande's style made him enemies within the bureaucracy and even more within industry circles who held him responsible for unleashing the raid raj during Singh's tenure as Rajiv Gandhi's finance minister. The bachelor civil servant from the IAS's Rajasthan cadre was above all, a doer, on whom even Rajiv Gandhi, against the advice of his coterie, was constrained to lean while drawing up Congress(I)'s pre-election Panchayati Raj programme.

But Pande wielded extra clout in Singh's government because he was Singh's die-hard loyalist. The raja's *purohit*. A man who could enforce the tough side of Singh, while Singh played the mild-mannered good guy. The alter ego whom even the pathologically suspicious Singh trusted more than his ministers.

Illustration by PRANAB DUTTA



In his first five months in office when Singh rode high so did Pande. He pushed the Bofors investigation. He advised Singh, against internal opposition, to visit Punjab. His voice boomed with clarity and decisiveness during meetings of the Kashmir crisis committee. He pushed through non-political judicial appointments. And to a large extent he was responsible for the remarkably open style of Singh's government.

But he became Singh's first victim. During the last five months, the most powerful man in the bureaucracy appeared to have turned into a wimp. His voice was no longer loud and clear. He barely offered any advice to the Cabinet. He was unable to speed up public sector appointments or to change controversial senior bureaucrats. Most of all he was unable to persuade Singh to launch a new campaign of raids against industrialists or even to go to court against stay orders involving some Rs 4,000 crore in tax and excise evasion. Pande retreated into his hobby of casting horoscopes and crafting bad poetry.

This reflected not the fall of Pande but of Singh. His inability to initiate a vigorous new drive against economic offenders—a campaign on which Singh had made his national reputation—revealed how severely Singh had been compromised and weakened by factions and vested interests in his own party who had also made Pande the lightening rod for their ire.

When Pande came under attack from the Chandra Shekhar, Devi Lal, and even the Jan Morcha factions, Singh did not defend him. And Pande sidelined himself as a time-server. Five months ago, we needed neither Pande's famous horoscopes nor crystal balls to foretell Singh's fortunes. We only had to look at Pande's plight to recognise that Singh had sunk into an administrative and political quagmire from which even Mars in the Seventh House would not be able to extricate him.

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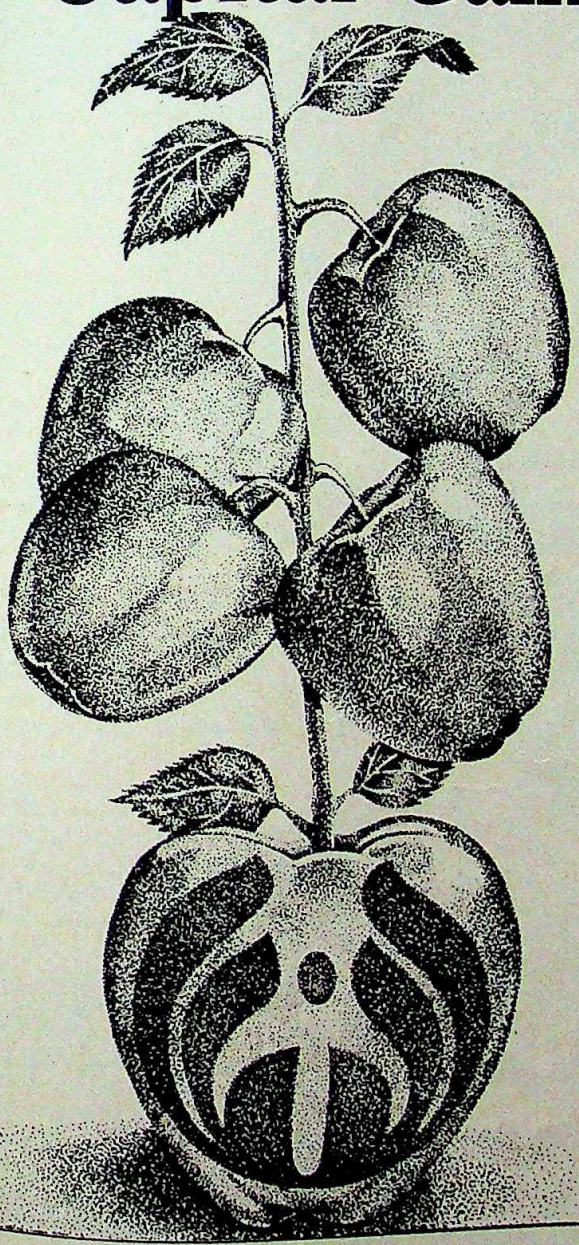
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KALAHANDI

Boomeranging Issue

Now Congress(I) uses it to pin the Janata Dal

THE recently concluded monsoon session of the Orissa Assembly was politically acrobatic, with the Janata Dal ministry headed by Chief Minister Biju Patnaik and the Congress(I) exchanging accustomed roles and contentions with remarkable elan.

The issue: the parched district of Kalahandi, which hit the headlines far back in public memory. The place has since sputtered out of importance due to media neglect and political fickleness, although babies are reportedly still being sold by starving parents and mass migration is continuing. After all the hullabaloo created about the state of the district nothing concrete appears to have been done, in spite of half-hearted efforts being made to distribute relief materials. But more than lifting the place and its inhabitants out of the throes of poverty it is being made into a political issue which politicians hold aloft like a party flag.

Kalahandi had been sufficiently muddied over for it to have been hidden from public view. Till now, that is. The Congress(I), in the opposition, has found that it can still strike a chord in the electorate and the Janata Dal finds the entire issue embarrassing—a distinct change from the days when the once ruling Congress(I) had its hands full of it and the then Opposition had monopolised it as its staple electoral gambit. Used adroitly and sagaciously now, Kalahandi could still provide resuscitation, however insincere it might be, to bring the Congress (I) back to primacy in the state.

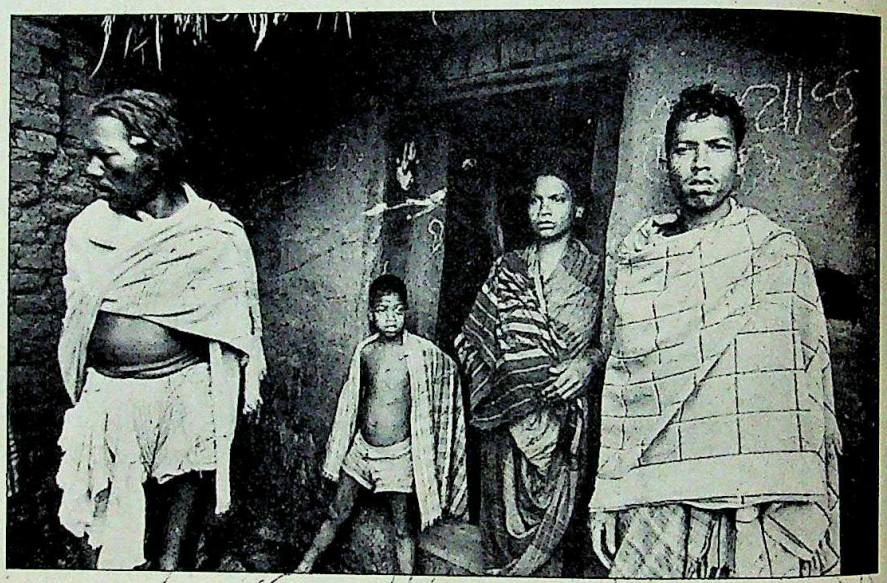
In fact, led by the PCC(I) chief, Giridhar Gomango, the Congress(I) has already marshalled its forces to take the skirmish to the streets, posing the threat of a sustained agitation. Petitions about ignoring Kalahandi are becoming a regular fare in many towns of the state.

The Congress(I)'s complacency has been replaced by Chief Minister Biju Patnaik's. He maintains: "Kalahandi is improving," while opposition leader Basanta Kumar Biswal repeats: "Kalahandi is deteriorating." This doomsaying has begun to have the desired effect: the Janata Dal has been split over this issue. Biju Patnaik is ranged acridly against Bhakta Charan Das, MP from Kalahandi, and till recently the Union deputy minister for sports, who has now joined hands with the Chandra Shekhar faction of the Janata Dal.

Das grudgingly acknowledges that "more needs to be done in Kalahandi. The scene has not improved". This bland honesty has done little to improve his standing with Biju Patnaik who, in the first place, has never quite been congenial about sharing the same party platform with Das.

Das himself has been tarred all over by first marketing himself as Kalahandi's messiah with the help of the media during his stint as an opposition MLA in the Orissa Assembly, and then doing nothing worthwhile to obviate the misery of the people. He is commonly accused of forgetting, after being elected minister, his own demand that Kalahandi be given a special status. He has been roundly chastised, by both the Congress(I) and the chief minister's loyalists, of helping his cronies to corner the spoils of whatever relief reaches Kalahandi, of bringing relief operations to a standstill and of stalling ongoing projects.

He has also drawn flak for trying to monopolise the issue for his own benefit. The assembly seat he vacated on winning the Lok Sabha one was given to his brother, Ajit Das. He also secured a Rajya Sabha nomination for a close







Kalahandi villagers (top); Patnaik (left) and Das: bitter squabble

Accused of neglecting his constituency, Das is warding off criticism by blaming Biju Patnaik.

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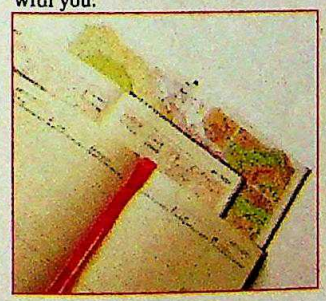
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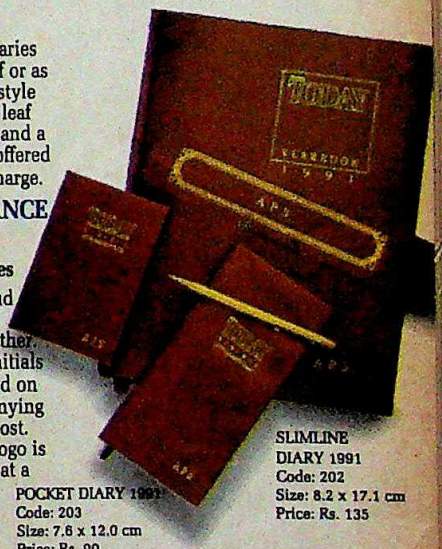
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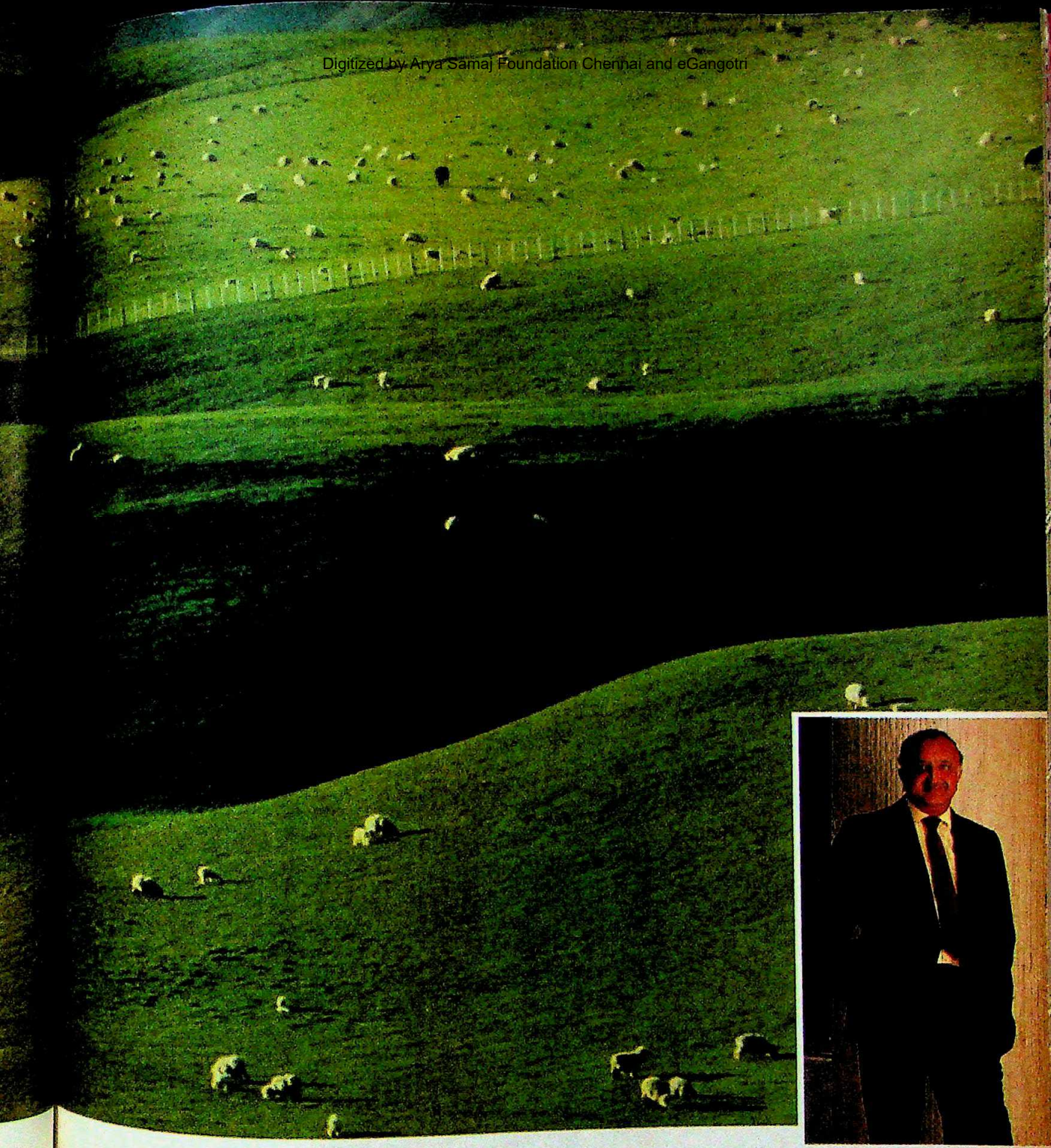
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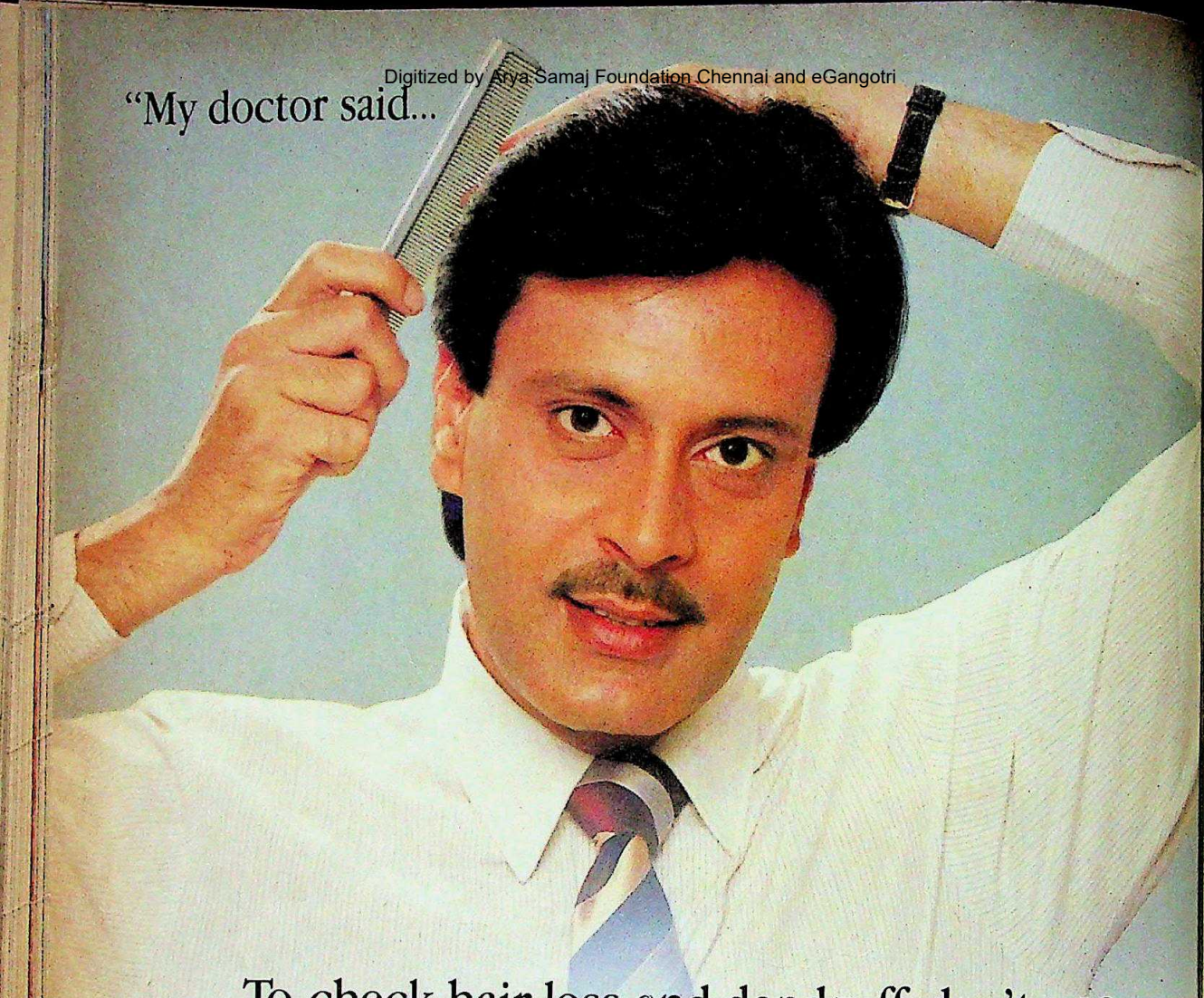
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aide, Bijoy Das. However, Ajit Das has put him in a tight spot by attempting to molest a woman in Bhawanipatna, the district town of Kalahandi.

Put on the defensive by an assortment of allegations from all sides, Das is trying to ward off criticism by putting the larger share of the blame on Biju Patnaik and the state Government. On a recent visit to the state, one of his increasingly infrequent ones, Das lambasted Patnaik for "letting down" Kalahandi. "The welfare of the district is a state subject and Patnaik has abysmally failed in his responsibilities," he said. He also announced that a protest day would be observed on March 5 next year, Biju Patnaik's birthday, to flesh out the neglect of Kalahandi and to put pressure on the state Government.

Das also denies having ever played foul and says that he has not given up his demand for special status for the district. "I have submitted a memorandum to the prime minister demanding the same. Only the Orissa Government has not sent in a formal proposal," he says.

Neither Das nor Patnaik is coming clean. What could have upset Das and set him on his current course is Patnaik's outright refusal to accommodate his chosen few in the district party set-up. Das is identified as Chandra Shekhar's man and this loyalty outside the confines of the state irks Patnaik. The undercurrent of hostility surfaced in public last year: as a legislator, Das had been on his feet in the Assembly berating the Government for its apathy towards Kalahandi. Then Patnaik walked into the House, and curtly told Das to keep quiet and sit down. Angered by this, Das walked out in protest.

Further, Patnaik is known to be needling Das on his own territory: overlooking the latter's claims, Janata Dal legislator Surendra Patjoshi has been appointed the district Dal president. Mortified that the plum post had slipped out of his hands, Das immediately launched a tirade against Patnaik. And Patjoshi retaliated by charging that when Das should have been distributing relief materials in Kalahandi, he had chosen to fly to Beijing for the Asian Games. Das has earlier also been accused of misusing relief materials.

All these political shenanigans are not going to bail out Kalahandi. The people, as usual, have been left to pray for the piper.

—RUBEN BANERJEE

PORBANDAR

Dubious Move

Ace police chief transferred

A hero is hard to come by in this time and age. And to find one in the beleaguered Indian police is doubly difficult. If found, the vitiated political atmosphere in the country cannot tolerate him for long. That is the unsavoury moral one draws from the transfer last fortnight of Mohan Jha, chief of Porbandar's police force.

The brave IPS officer who had singlehandedly metamorphosed a gangsters' haven into a reasonably civilised place befitting the birthplace of Mahatma Gandhi, has been considered dispensable by the Gujarat Chief Minister Chimanbhai Patel. His compulsion is easy to understand though not condone. After the BJP pulled out of the coalition government, he is trying to hold on to his flock. This may have led him to capitulate to the Porbandar MLA, Santokben Jadeja, who has been seeking to scalp Jha. An alleged mafia queen herself, she is the widow of Sharman Munja, considered the most dreaded mafia leader in Gujarat before he was shot dead in 1987 in an inter-gang battle. Jha had incurred her wrath by his daring attempt to crack down on the gangs of both Jadeja and her brother-in-law Bhura Munja.

NAVIN B. MODHA



Jha with seized weapons

When Jha took charge in May last year, he resolved to clean up the coastal town nicknamed the 'Dhanbad of Gujarat'. Before him, successive police chiefs had been cowed down by the bloodthirsty dons who belonged to the two backward communities: Kharva and Mer. Their writ ran large as they had usurped most power positions at the taluka level, and made or marred the careers of many politicians. The dons, who were armed to the teeth with modern weapons, extorted money from not only traders, industrialists, and transporters, but virtually everyone. Gang wars abounded, and some like Rajshi and Devshi Rama of the Malde Rama gang gained notoriety as sadistic rapists.

It was these sordid tales of terror that led Jha to conclude that only with maverick methods could he storm the citadels of crime. He unleashed an offensive to counter-terrorise the gangsters. For starters, he banished political interference and even suspended a police inspector for colluding with the Bhura Munja gang, thus signalling his intentions clearly.

But what won Jha the battle against goonda raj was his rather unconventional practice of giving a sound thrashing to the gangsters in full public glare. This removed the fear of the dreaded dons from the people's minds and restored their confidence in the police.

He took the Munja gang head-on when he spread a dragnet for Deva Vasta Rabari, its notorious member, who was evading arrest. Jha thrashed him in the chowk of Thyan village before putting him behind bars. Many others were meted out similar treatment. Unfortunately, before he could close in on Malde Rama and Ebha Arjan, nephew of Munja, Jha has been given his marching orders.

Yet even his brief stint has changed the complexion of the town. Says Narsinh Devani, chief of Porbandar's Chamber of Commerce: "With the improved law and order situation, the local economy is back on the rails. The credit for this goes largely to Jha."

Now with Jha's politically motivated transfer, a fear psychosis is ready to grip the Porbandar denizens once again. Unless, of course, another officer with a ramrod backbone is posted there. —UDAY MAHURKAR in Porbandar

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BIHAR

Panic Press

Hindi papers incite violence



AYODHYA. October 30. The dateline will remain etched in memory for years to come. On that day, when things reached a flashpoint in the holy city, which had been virtually covered in a saffron swathe as kar sewaks kept pouring in, the media pressed the panic button, as the historic one-line flash, "Kar Sewa Begins", was relayed by wire services across the country.

The three-word flash almost seemed to have opened the floodgates of what is being referred to as "saffron" journalism. Said a senior journalist Urmilesh: "For a while the Hindi press, mostly in Uttar Pradesh, forgot that they were newspapers and got emotionally involved with the event." The next morning, *Aaj* ran a banner that screamed: *"Suraksha balon ki goli se char mare, Ashok Singhal ke sar mein goli lagi, Baba Ramchandra Paramhans bhi ghayal, Ayodhya mein kar sewa shuroo, sena ka goli chalane se inkar."* (Four killed in the firing by security forces, bullet hits Ashok Singhal in the head, Baba Ramchandra Paramhans also wounded, kar sewa begins in Ayodhya, the army refuses to open fire.)

And if that wasn't inflammatory enough, the *Navbharat Times* bulletin screamed: *"Lakhon kar sewakon ne suraksha balon ki lathi aur goli ki parwah kiye bagair vivadit Babri Masjid ko lagbhag dhwast kar diya."* (Lakhs of kar sewaks defied the lathis and bullets of security forces and nearly demolished the disputed Babri Masjid.)

The fall-out of the reports was immediate: communal clashes broke out in Patna city and Gridih and parts of Jamshedpur were placed under curfew. As Chief Minister Laloo Prasad Yadav attacked the press for fanning communal animosities, the broadsheets changed tack. Overnight the *Navbharat Times* and *Aaj* toned down their coverage.

The Resident Editor of *Aaj*, Alok Mehta admitted that reports on Ayodhya had some errors. But these, he felt, occurred because the edition was rushed through and not out of any motivated slant. In the meantime, Chandreshwar Vidyarthi, who is in charge of the Patna edition of *Aaj*, continued to defend the reportage: "We agree that such events should not be played up. But we do not agree that communal violence flared up because of our reports."

Despite Vidyarthi's claims to the contrary, communal flames spread with lightning speed not only within Bihar but in Uttar Pradesh also due to the exaggerated and often blatantly communal reports in *Aaj*. The newspaper's brazenness was evident on Kartik Purnima day when kar sewaks stormed Ayodhya again. The paper then ran a banner screaming: *"Ayodhya mein Ram bhakton par ghanton firing, saikron hatahat."* (Firing on devotees of Ram in Ayodhya, hundreds wounded). It also went to the extent of saying that the security forces didn't even spare women, children and the infirm.

Not that the Bihar Government took the matter lightly. Last fortnight, Chakravarti Ganapati, who is in charge of the Ranchi edition of *Aaj*, was arrested after the district administration found a headline saying that the Ram mandap at Ayodhya had been destroyed by the police. This, the administration felt, was largely responsible for the communal flareups in Ranchi.

The inflammatory headlines fanned communal animosity which resulted in clashes in many parts of the state.

Kar sewaks in Ayodhya: playing with fire

PRAMOD PUSHKARNA



In sharp contrast to the Hindi press, the Urdu press—also known as the "Muslim press" and hitherto believed to be playing up only Muslim issues—was more cautious in its coverage of the sensitive Ramjanmabhoomi-Babri Masjid issue. Example: the *Azimabad Express* headlined the October 30 event saying "Babri Masjid structure is completely safe". In fact, its Editor, Rizwan Ahmad, wrote a front page signed editorial asking the Muslims to remain calm.

But even if the Urdu press avoided taking the Islam-in-danger line, the credibility of the print media had already been damaged by the sensationalist stance of the Hindi press.

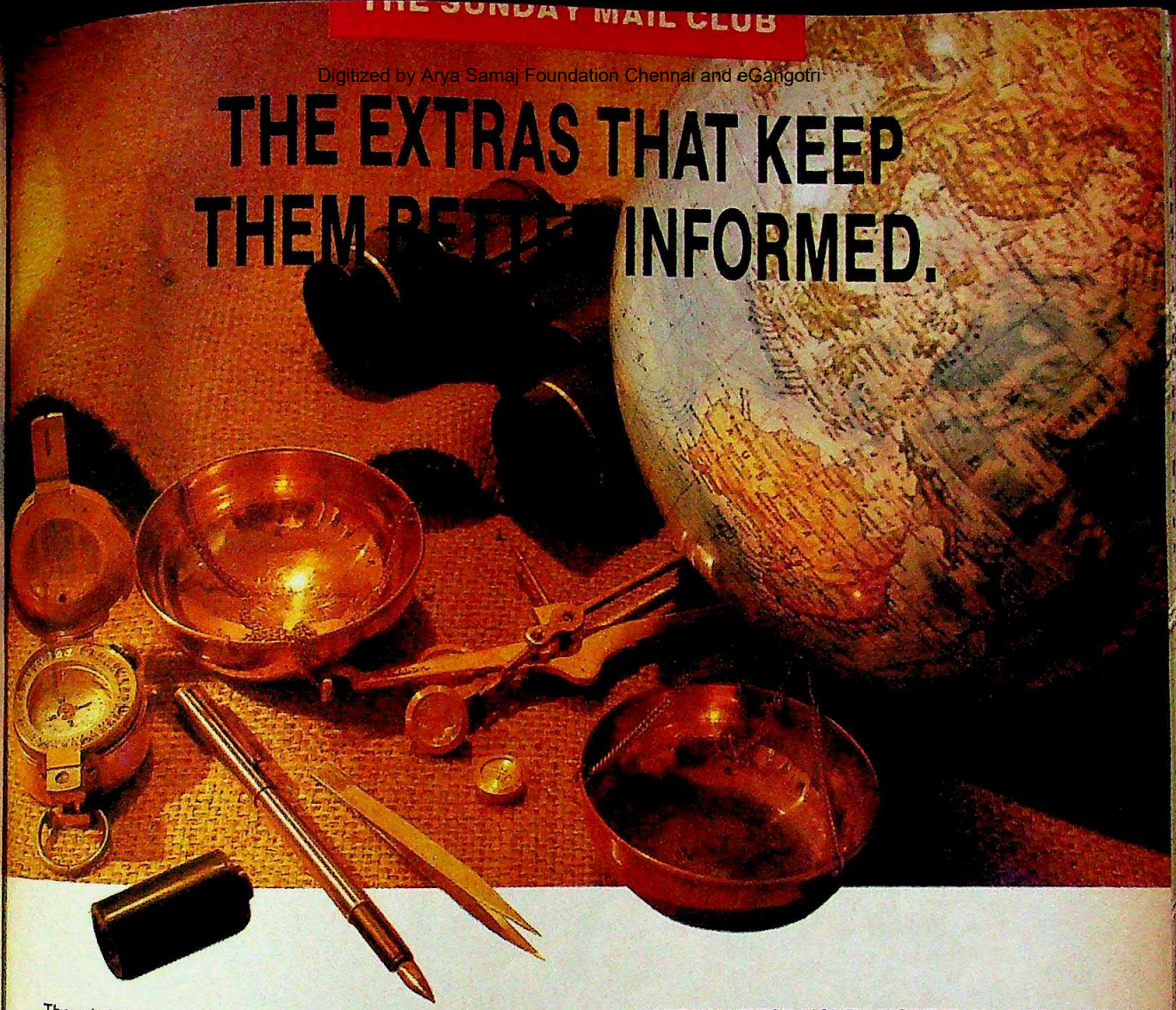
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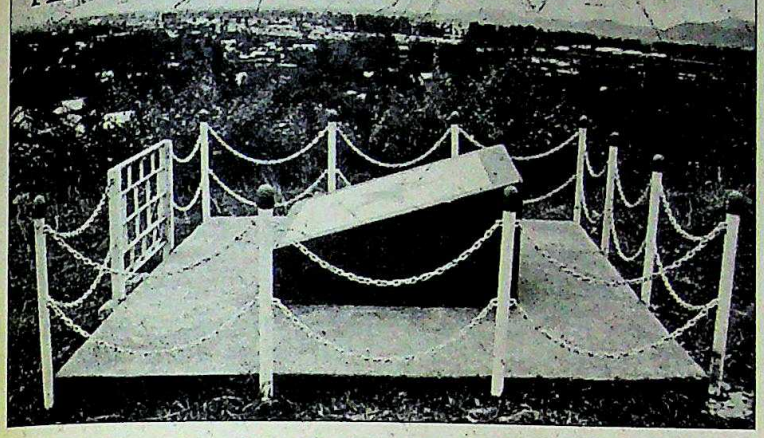


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MANIPUR

Anarchic State



Rebel 'martyrs' memorial in Imphal



EVEN as Manipur readies itself to observe the centenary of the 1891 Khongjom war—when the British annexed the state—another dormant battlefront is coming alive. Emboldened by the withdrawal of the bulk of the 8th Mountain Division—which has performed a counter-insurgency role in the Manipur-Nagaland region—tribal guerrillas and Meitei insurgents have become active again.

Earlier, the army units were moved to Kashmir in the belief that the political process and armed action had broken the back of insurgency. Now, it seems that was a miscalculation. Recovering from the army's nasty parting blows, which destroyed many National Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN) hideouts, the guerrillas are striking along both sides of the Nagaland-Manipur border.

In the last two months, the NSCN has killed four Manipur Rifles jawans and a nurse working in a military hospital. On November 1, it ambushed a Border Security Force patrol near the Indo-Burma border, killing five.

The spurt of violence has broken the uneasy calm in Imphal. With the revival of the anti-Mayang (outsider) movement in Manipur, last fortnight a Chinese-made grenade was hurled at a non-Manipuri businessman, Surinder Singh. As the threat of violence grows, Manipur Rifles jawans and the police patrol the streets. Sand bags fortify the Imphal jail where some of the underground leaders are incarcerated.

Most panicked are the state's businessmen, particularly the non-Manipuris, who have been receiving letters of extortion from the Peoples Liberation Army (PLA). However, it isn't just the non-Manipuris who are worried. Chief Minister Raj Kumar Ranbir Singh's Government is also breaking out in cold sweat over the situation. But there is a basic contradiction in its search for a solution to the problem. While many of the Government's members—who are former insurgents—are committed to a political solution, they also favour the lifting of the Armed Forces Special Powers Act. At the same time Singh is already missing the army. Said he: "I have been assured that the army division will soon be back. We hope the situation will then improve." Also, he talks of lifting the Act in the Imphal valley, even as it stays in the hills.

Making matters worse are the strained relations between the Government and the security forces. While Singh says he is "not satisfied with the role of the forces", the forces fume that the Government is soft-pedalling on the PLA. Even worse, last fortnight, the state came to a standstill as a result of the All Manipur Students' Union's call for a 48-hour state bandh from November 4. Besides protesting the Government's failure to apprehend the killers of a college girl, Tampa Sana, the students raised the demand to include Manipuri in the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution.

With the Central law and order machinery already overstretched, prospects of a violent election in Assam and anti-outsider trouble in Meghalaya gaining strength, the coming winter in Manipur can only be a grim one.

—UTTAM SENGUPTA in Imphal

KARNATAKA

A Hard Blow

Report indicts Hegde's son



WHEN the scandal about the son of former Karnataka chief minister Ramakrishna Hegde being charged with cheating a medical student of Rs 2.5 lakh first broke in 1985, newspapers had screaming headlines about it splashed all over their front pages. But when the issue became the subject of an official inquiry, everything went quiet for five long years as the wheels of justice ground creakily to their conclusion.

The commission of inquiry into what came to be known as the 'M.D. Seat Scandal' has now pronounced its verdict. It indicted Hegde's son Bharat,

PRASHANT PANJIAR



Hegde: sullied image

36, and two of his associates for taking Rs 2.5 lakh from Sudha Satyanath in return for securing her a post-graduate seat in the Belgaum Medical College. They failed to get her the seat and also failed to return the cash.

In his 223-page report, the chairman of the inquiry, Justice Parameshwar Dayal, finds Bharat Hegde guilty along with his cousin Udayshankar and the third man in the troika, C.P. Lakshman. But he also gives a tongue-lashing to his father, Ramakrishna Hegde, for his role in the scandal: "Hegde is certainly guilty of overdoing the defence of his son and nephew. His pleadings before the commission displayed arrogance, power puffedness and impoliteness."

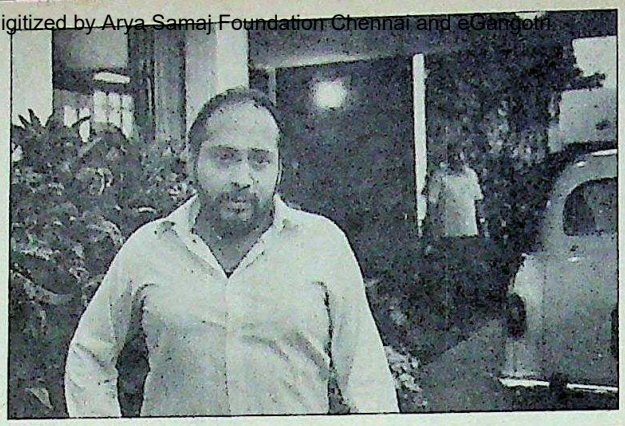
The report also stated: "He was expected to have sympathy with his son and nephew but as a chief minister

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he was also expected to maintain the norms of democracy." Damning words indeed about a former chief minister but the commission nevertheless did not indict Hegde on any particular charge.

The response of current Chief Minister S. Bangarappa to the report has been swift: he's announced that his government will abide by the commission's recommendation that criminal proceedings should be started against Bharat Hegde.



Bharat Hegde: in the dock

A.K. Subbiah, who first broke the story to the press after seeing the police complaint and is presently a Congress(I) MLC, is very determined that Ramakrishna Hegde should not be let off the hook:"I am fully satisfied with the report and the stand of the Bangarappa Government. But it should decide what action is to be taken against Hegde for misusing his power and authority to shield his son."

Subbiah's main complaint against Hegde is that he was instrumental in removing his son's name from the chargesheet drawn up by the police.

Whatever eventually happens to his father, Bharat Hegde is still emphatic about his innocence—despite the commission's findings. "The report is politically motivated. We will challenge the Government's action in the high court as my conscience is clear," he said.

So it seems the stage is set for another legal battle. But even as Bangarappa was announcing his intention of starting proceedings against Bharat Hegde, a senior government official privately expressed scepticism about the chances of his ever appearing in the dock. "The report is purely speculative," he says.

It's equally difficult to predict whether Hegde will also be arraigned for his attempts to protect his wayward offspring. As Justice Dayal says in his report: "All this is shocking. But it is for the Government to decide if and what action has to be taken against him."

—C.B. YESHVANTH KUMAR

EXAMINATION CONTROVERSY

Test Trauma

WHEN 29-year-old Sunil Kumar Gupta—a medical student at Hyderabad's Osmania Medical College—went in for his M.D Paediatrics examination in April this year, he had no reason to worry. After all, he had topped the M.B.B.S examinations for the past five years, bagging five gold medals.

But when the panel of four examiners began firing questions during the viva voce tests, Gupta's hands turned clammy. Reason: the questions cast doubts about the central findings of his practicals. Suspecting that he was the victim of a vendetta campaign, Gupta complained to the University of Health Sciences Vice-Chancellor Dr L. Suryanarayana, exposed the examiners, faced a re-examination and finally, last fortnight, earned the M.D degree.

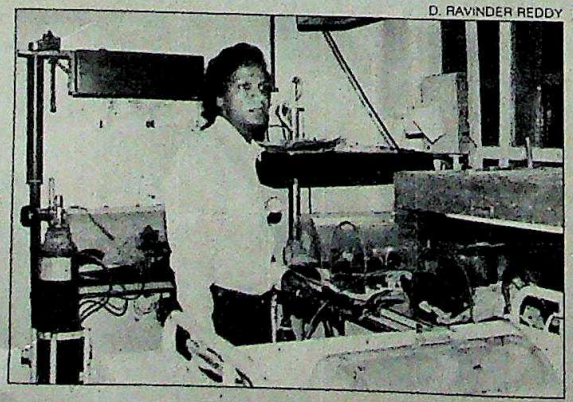
As it turned out, Gupta had been victimised for highlighting the pathetic conditions in Hyderabad's Niloufer Hospital for children back in 1988. But the then hospital superintendent Dr P.S. Murthy—one of the examiners at the M.D examination—wasn't amused.

Fearing the worst, Gupta wrote to Dr Suryanarayana about his misgivings less than a week after the April examination. He then met the panel chairperson and Niloufer Hospital Superintendent Dr Sheila Karan, who unwittingly admitted that the other examiners had conspired with Dr Murthy to fail Gupta.

In a dramatic twist, Gupta recorded the conversation with Karan on a hidden cassette recorder. As he made the sensational transcripts public, Dr Suryanarayana was forced to order an inquiry by Osmania Medical College Principal Dr A.V.S. Reddy. And on his recommendation an exclusive re-examination was arranged for Gupta by two well known teachers from outside the state who found him to be a competent post graduate. Thereafter the University of Health Sciences awarded him the M.D. degree. Furthermore, the university decided to bar Dr Murthy and the others from future examinations.

Gupta: vindicated stand

D. RAVINDER REDDY



Denying all charges of vendetta, Dr Murthy said: "If I had anything against him I'd have failed him in the diploma in child health examination for which I was his examiner." However, he failed to mention that Gupta took that examination well before he drew attention to the appalling conditions at Niloufer Hospital.

While Dr Karan felt that "taping a private conversation was in bad taste," Gupta has no regrets. Said he: "It was unethical to tape her account without letting her know. But it was not as bad as what the other examiners had done to me." Clearly a believer in the well-worn cliche: do unto others as others do unto you.

—AMARNATH K. MENON

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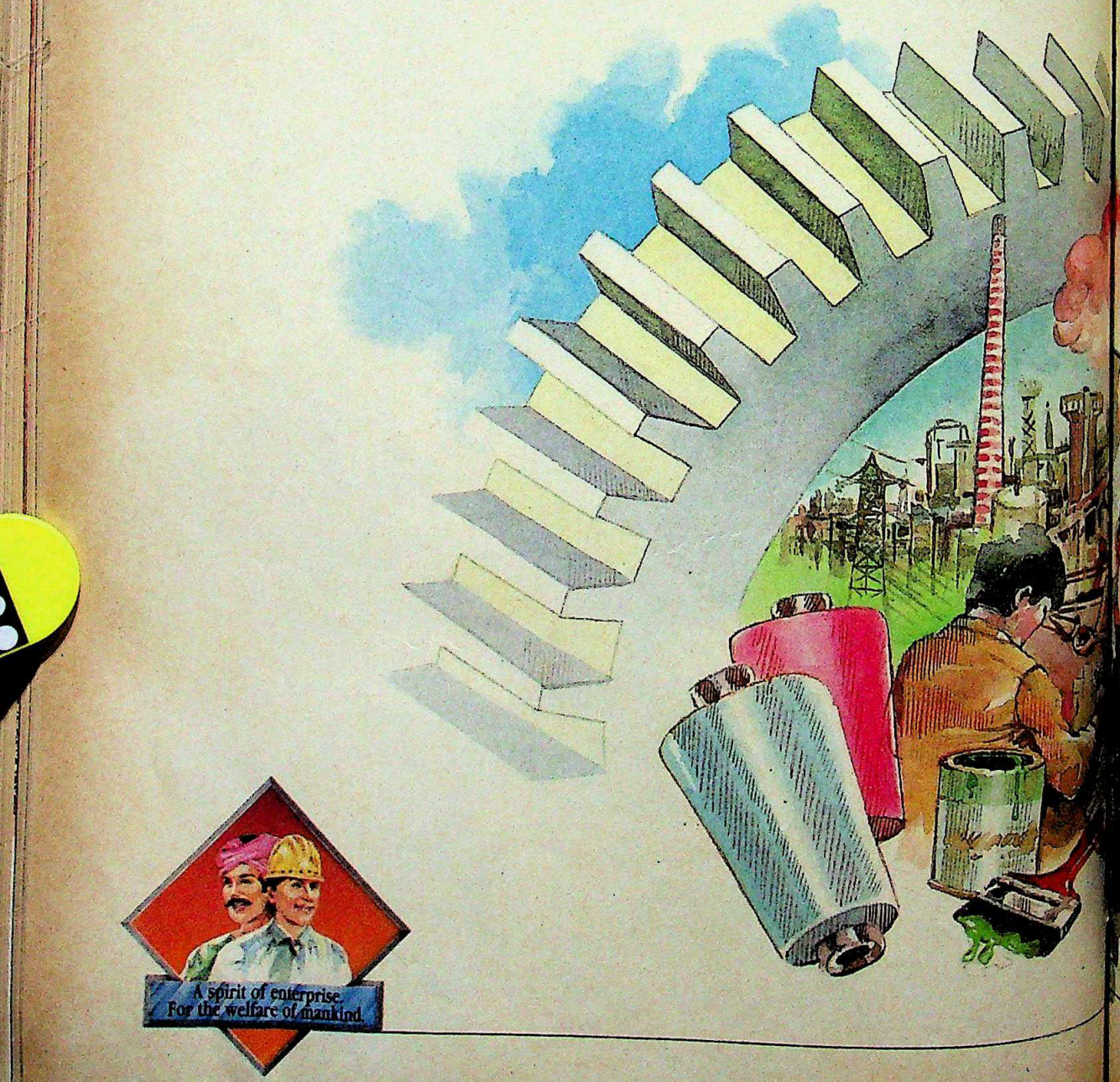
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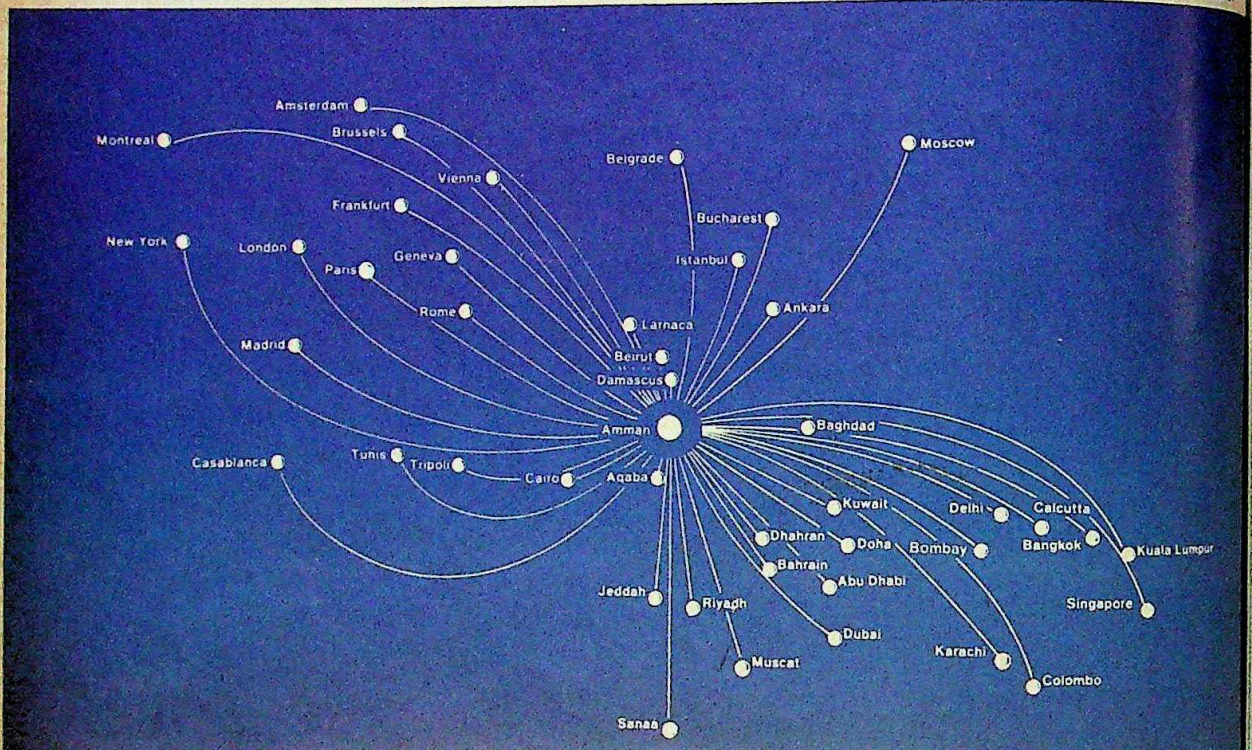
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SIGN POSTS

SHORN: Uma Bharati, the saffron-clad BJP firebrand MP, of her lustrous locks. Known as the 'sexy sanyasin', she cut off her long hair so she could impersonate as a boy and get into Ayodhya to lead a jatha of kar sewaks. She managed to do so, but only to be nabbed by the police.



ARRIVED: Finally, the *Business and Political Observer*, on November 5, more than a year late. The newspaper, meant to have been the Ambanis' big entry point into the media, has seen endless hiccups and hitches, including changes of name and editors.

DIED: Bhalchandra Digamber Garware, 87, noted industrialist, in Pune after a heart attack. Garware, who didn't have much formal education, built from scratch his enormous business empire which included Garware Paints and Garware Plastics and Polyester Limited.

RELEASE SPURNED: by S.C. Dixit, vice-president of the VHP, arrested in Ayodhya while leading kar sewaks. The high court notice to this effect could not be carried out as the former DGP of Uttar Pradesh Police refused to be freed.



DIED: Vinod Mehra, 45, the Hindi film star, after a massive heart attack in Bombay. The actor, who had been married four times, including once each to actresses Rekha and Bindiya Goswami, has more than 40 films to his credit, many of them as lead star.



DIED: Manmohan Krishna, 69, Hindi cinema's well-known character actor, memorable for his cameo roles as the benign doctor. He was a lecturer before coming to Bombay in 1945. A proficient singer and versatile actor, he acted in over 200 films.

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PUNJAB

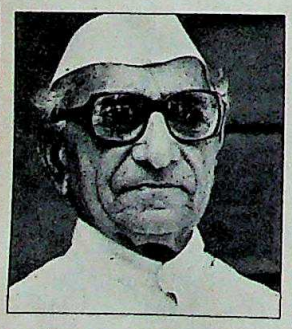
Supreme Disregard

● THE Punjab Police chief, K.P.S. Gill, continues to charge on in Punjab, with no regard to who might be at the receiving end. Last fortnight, it happened to be the Supreme Court, at least by default.

Earlier, the Supreme Court had directed the Punjab and Haryana High Court to probe the killing of Kuljit Singh, sarpanch of village Ambala Jattan in Hoshiarpur district, in an alleged encounter last year. He was related to Bhagat Singh and the martyr's sister Prakash Kaur had filed the case. The high court appointed H.L. Randev, a retired sessions judge, as the commissioner of inquiry.

Randev directed the Punjab Government to transfer five senior officials named as accused in the case, including a district police chief, to non-operational posts. But Governor Virendra Verma waffled on the issue following Gill's intransigent stand that the police officials concerned were on the hit list of terrorists and in danger if shifted to unimportant posts. A piqued Randev has now intimated

Verma: in a bind



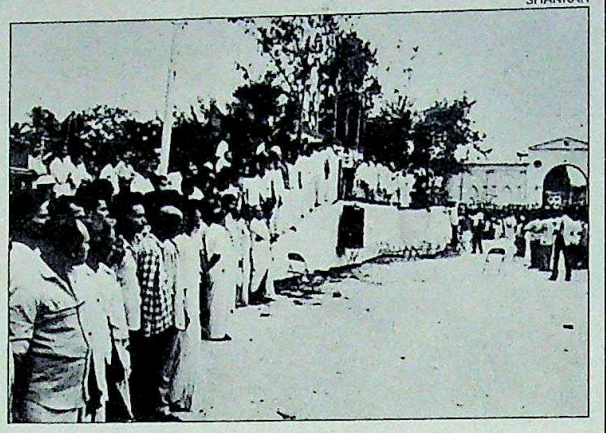
to the Supreme Court his inability to proceed with the inquiry due to non-compliance of his orders.

While the main issue—the killing of Kuljit Singh—has been put on the backburner, the question being asked is: who calls the shots—Verma or Gill?

KERALA

Chained to Harmony

SHANKAR



The human chain: promoting amity

● WHEN the country was perched precariously on a powder keg last fortnight, Kerala staged a giant gesture to promote communal amity. Lakhs responded to a call given by the CPI(M)-led Left Democratic Front Government to form a 760-km-long human chain across the length of the state in support of secularism and unity of the country.

Irrespective of caste and creed, men, women and children walked miles and even braved the rain to join the chain. Holding hands they linked Manjeswaram in Kasargode district to Kalayikavila in Trivandrum district and sent out a roar of patriotism and catholicity.

Referring to the recent violence over the Ramjanmabhoomi issue, CPI(M) General Secretary E.M.S. Namboodiripad said at a rally staged on the occasion that nobody should be allowed to set the various communities against one another.

Unfortunately, the day witnessed clashes as the RSS and the BJP tried to sabotage the 'anti-Hindu human chain'. The Congress(I) and its allies also boycotted it.

Notwithstanding, the day belonged to Kerala which is the proud home of the Sabarimala temple and the Onam festival, symbols of interfaith cooperation.

ORISSA

A Controversial Tack

● IN his typically bluff and brash style, Chief Minister Biju Patnaik has sparked off a fresh controversy in Orissa. It all began when Patnaik came out in defence of Indian Metals and Ferro Alloys (IMFA), a big private industrial house, in the state Assembly. The previous government had contended that IMFA owed a staggering Rs 18 crore to the Orissa State Electricity Board (OSEB) by way of unpaid bills.

The chief minister subsequently wrote off the dues and even accused certain OSEB officials of harassing IMFA. He went on to declare that it was in fact the OSEB which owed Rs 8 crore to the company for using power generated in the company's power plant.

Patnaik has not come out with a detailed explanation of his actions. Meanwhile, the OSEB engineer's association has expressed dismay over Patnaik's pronouncements and sought a probe into the episode by an assembly house committee. Clearly, the last on the subject has not been heard.

MADHYA PRADESH

Sweeping Changes

● A powerful clique of the top IPS officers in Madhya Pradesh is unhappy with the new police chief, S.V. Singh. The 'clean' director-general (DG) of police has repeatedly rubbed them up the wrong side. To begin with, he ordered the officers to attend to their work in uniform and even chided them for their penchant for disappearing for long hours on the pretext of a lunch-break. But now Singh has started hitting them where it hurts the most—the small perks and privileges the top brass deem to be their birthright.

Singh must have come with a king-sized broom. He found that officers posted in the police headquarters were paid 'pocket money' from the unaccounted secret service

Singh: cleaning up

R.C. SAHU



fund: every month each IG received Rs 500, each DIG Rs 400 and so on. Another startling revelation was the misuse of the police welfare fund, meant primarily for policemen at lower ranks, that was squandered on the maintenance of a tennis court patronised by the sahibs and on liquor swigged at cocktail parties held in the officers mess. Singh put an end to all that.

However, Singh is due for retirement by the year-end and the officers hope that with his departure, small privileges, which make working for the police such a pleasure, will stage a comeback.

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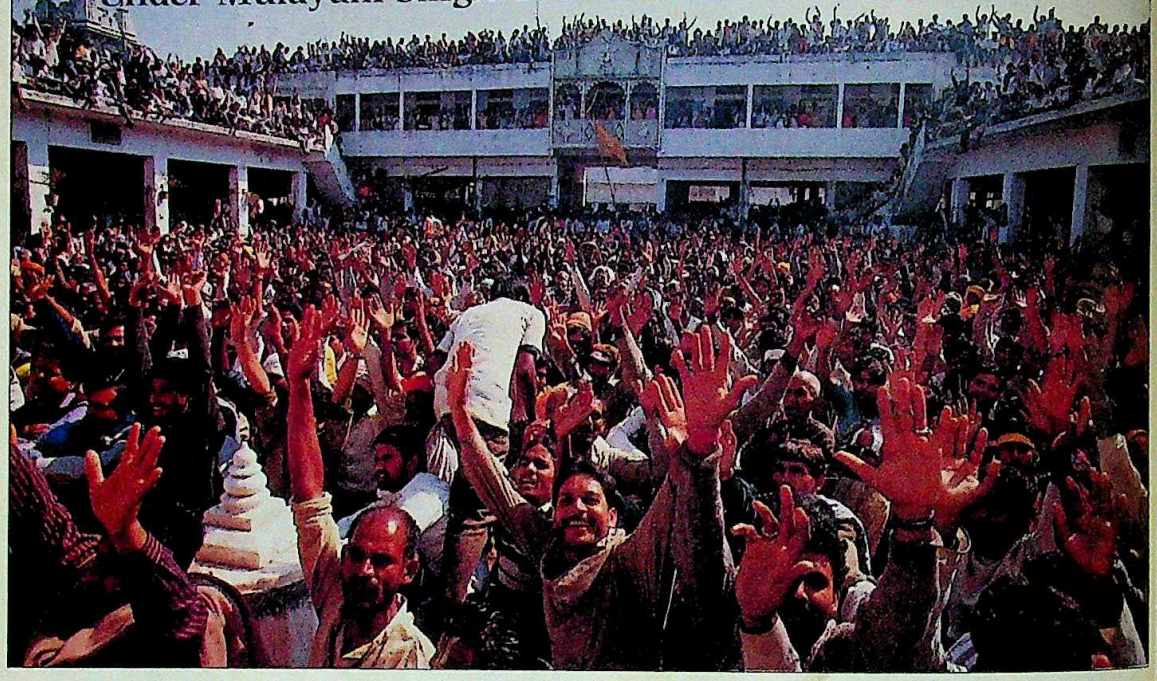
Photographs by PRAMOD PUSHKARNA

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UTTAR PRADESH

State of Chaos

Under Mulayam Singh Yadav confusion reigns supreme



By DILIP AWASTHI

Kar sewaks meeting at Char Dham mandir in Ayodhya

NEVER a communally placid state, post-Ayodhya Uttar Pradesh is in a mess, with its Chief Minister, Mulayam Singh Yadav, stripped indecorously of his primary membership in the Janata Dal after having reduced the state's social and political fabric to tatters. Given a chance, the BJP and the VHP, incensed over what they consider his unduly abrasive handling of the Babri Masjid-Ramjanmabhoomi issue, would spike his head on a pole. Even the Congress(I), which in the extraordinary circumstances prevailing in the state might have been inclined to bail him out in order to rend the Janata Dal further, might just shy away, finding that he is too hot to touch as he has earned the hostility of most of the state's citizens. Further, he has been unable to consolidate an OBC-Muslim vote bank and has frittered away any chances of communal congeniality for years to come.

Following his dumping by V.P. Singh's Janata Dal, it is unlikely that Yadav's ministry will survive. According to sources, in the 426-member House, the number of MLAs supporting Yadav is around 110, including 80 of his own faction, 16 of the 25 MLAs of the Janata Party and 16 of the 45 Independents. But dissidence is bound to take its toll: 70 MLAs of the Ajit Singh faction, 36 of the Jan Morcha and about 10 of the Janata Party are ranged against him. Yadav's survival depends solely upon the 94 members of the Congress(I) and the 13 low-key MLAs of the Bahujan Samaj Party.

Virtually sealing his ministry's fate, five of his ministers resigned on November 10. They formed a solid block of vote-getters: Irrigation and Industries Minister Reoti Raman Singh, a long-time irritant on Yadav's hide, Education Minister Sachidanand Bajpai, Food and Civil Supplies Minister Diwakar Vikram Singh, Sports and Forest Minister Mohammed Aslam Khan and Health Minister Mukhtar Anees. Reoti Raman Singh led the section of the party that advised more caution on Yadav's part in dealing with the Ayodhya situation, while Bajpai was a surprise horse: he had made his loyalty known by backing the chief minister on his fiercely xenophobic anti-English campaign. The sports minister and the health minister were known to have been stepping on eggs when supporting him.

As matters go, the Congress(I) is in a quandary: while Narain Dutt Tiwari, head of the Uttar Pradesh Congress(I) Legislative Party, seems to be in favour of a patchwork formula with Yadav, others led by UPCC(I) President Rajendra Kumari Bajpai, are wary of losing popular support by shoring up Yadav's Government.

Many political analysts, of course, say that the kick-off to the unseemly fracas, as it now turns out to be, took place as far back as August 28, when Yadav addressed the first of his 32 *sadbhavna* rallies to muster up support for his anti-BJP raillery against the storming of Ayodhya on October 30. But the BJP had already hardened its stand against him: it had walked out of an all-party meeting on February 3 that Yadav had convened to try and sort out the Babri Masjid-Ramjanmabhoomi issue and later forced adjournment upon adjournment on various issues faced by the state Government

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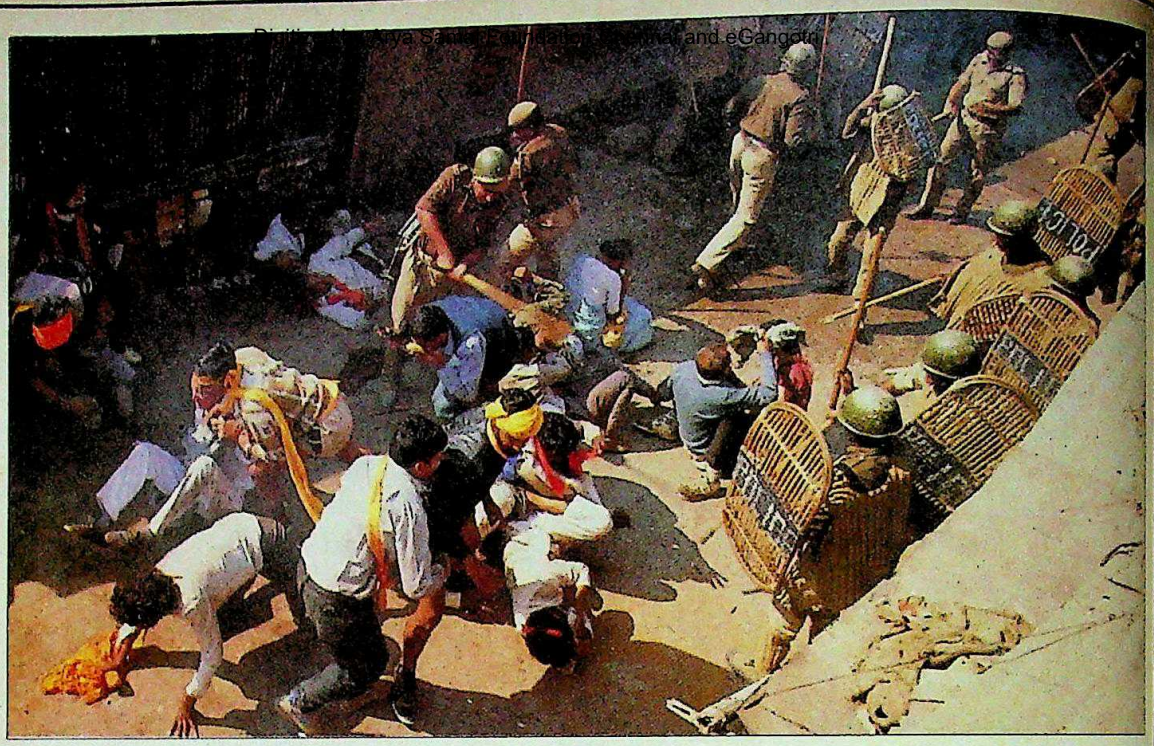
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Kar sewaks being lathi-charged

during the acrid budget session in June. Finally, when the *sant sammelan* in Hardwar on June 23 and 24 ratified the proposal to hold the kar sewa in Ayodhya on October 30, Yadav struck back by becoming even more high-pitched. The tourney had begun.

Furthermore, the mutual sniping led to a wary stand-off between Yadav and V.P. Singh at the Centre. Singh was reportedly more inclined towards letting BJP stalwart L.K. Advani's Rath Yatra amble through the state without much of an administrative hitch but Yadav put his gloves up. No way, he said, would Advani be allowed to enter the state. While Singh sought to maintain cordial equations with both Advani and Syed Abdullah Bukhari, the Shahi Imam of Delhi's Jama Masjid, Yadav pushed for a harder line than Singh had been toeing so far.

To compound matters, R.K. Gupta, president of the state BJP unit,in a bitter note put it on record that while the BJP was willing to softpedal its approach on the Ayodhya issue, Yadav's belligerence had scuttled any compromise. Yadav was, sources say, backed on the sly by Janata Dal members, led by Reoti Raman Singh.



Chandra Shekhar with Mulayam Singh Yadav

MOREOVER, Yadav had been lambasted for the communal riots in the Gonda district, in which at least 50 people died. It was also alleged that Munnan Khan, MP from Gonda and a close aide of Yadav, had a hand in instigating the riots. Yadav was unable to rid himself of the mud sticking to him for bumbling as the head of the state.

Bumbling and hardheadedness are the words: after the police assault on the kar sewaks on October 30, the chief minister, till then obstinate about not parleying with the BJP and the VHP, went into a huddle with their representatives, and on November 5 allowed the *parikrama* of the disputed site.

This tremulous backtrack after the obduracy fuelled speculation that he could, with some farsightedness, have avoided the bloodshed if he had "opened a window to Ayodhya, if not the door."

What both Yadav and V.P. Singh had sought to do is clear: in a kind of sly *danse de deux*, both tried to use each other to garner safe OBC and Muslim vote banks. However, Yadav miscalculated the massive turnout of members of his own community at Ayodhya on October 30. In fact, most of the 12 men killed in the police firing on November 2 in Ayodhya were said to have been Yadavs. Said Ram Awatar Yadav, 45, a farmer from Etawah: "Because of a *kul kalank* (blot on the

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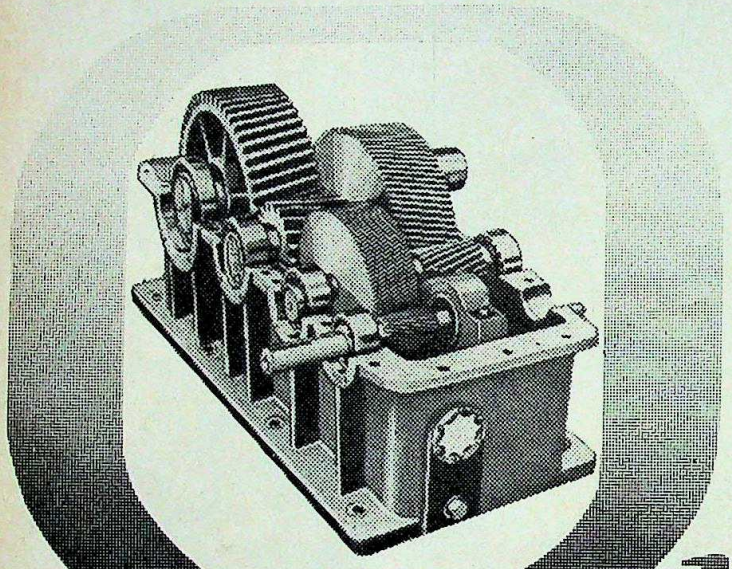
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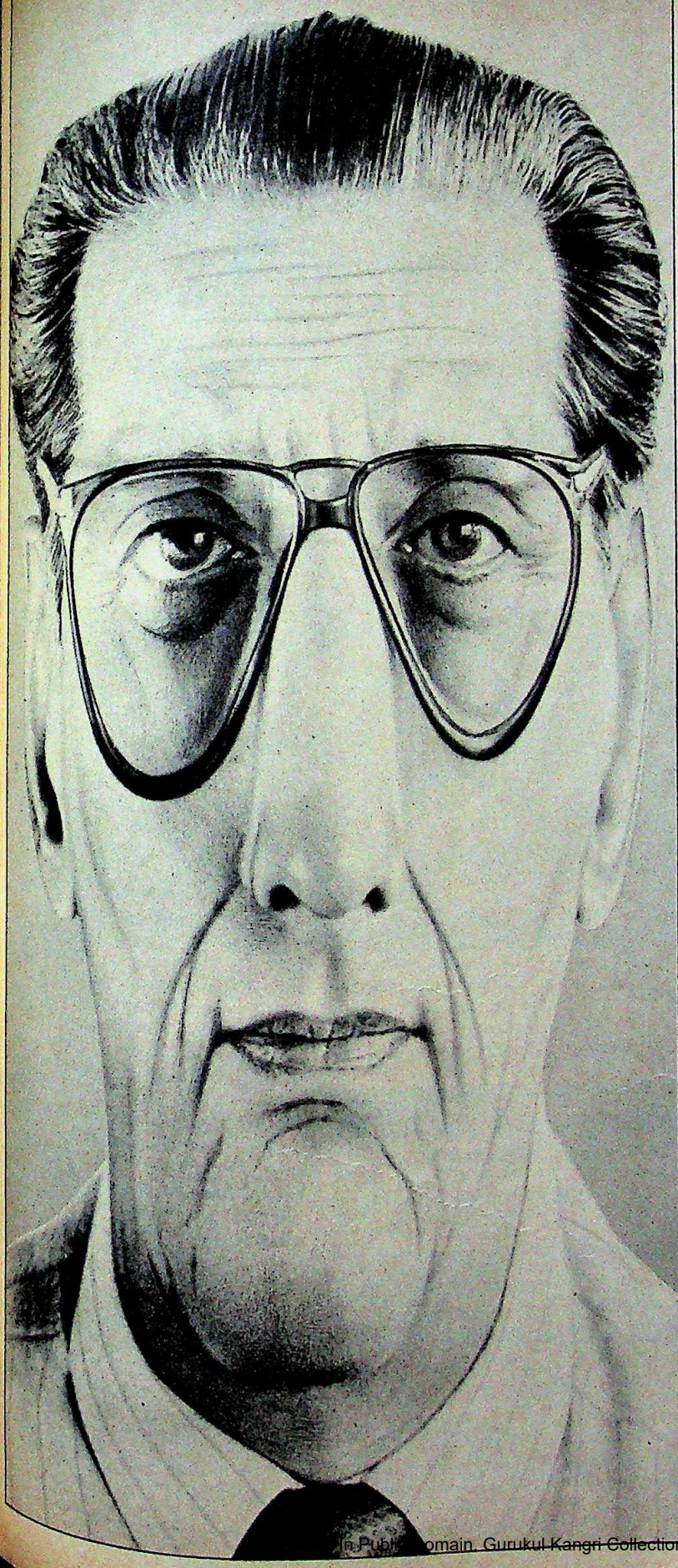
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HINDI PRESS

Under Attack

PRABHAKAR



IF it was the Babri Masjid which was under siege in Ayodhya, elsewhere in the state it was the press that was the target. Reason: the state felt the reporting in the vernacular press had been exaggerated and irresponsible. The crackdown, termed by media organisations as an attack on press freedom, began on October 30, the day of the kar sewa.

Undoubtedly, some Hindi dailies played up the events and tried to whip up communal passions by publishing headlines claiming that more than 100 persons were killed. On October 30 the Government banned the sales of *Lucknow Mail* and two special supplements of *Dainik Jagran* and *Swatantra Chetna*. About 40 hawkers were arrested for selling eveningers carrying exaggerated reports. Criminal cases were slammed on Vinod Shukla, resident editor of *Jagran* in Lucknow and two correspondents. Fearing arrest, Rajnath Singh, editor of *Swatantra Bharat*, secured anticipatory bail for himself and 25 of his staffers. Said J.P. Shukla, general secretary of the Journalists Association: "We have never seen such attempts to gag the press before."

If the Hindi press can be accused of not exercising restraint, the Government was at its repressive best, trying to cover up the happenings. There was virtually no information from official channels which encouraged rumour-mongering through the print media. Then there was disinformation. Mulayam Singh Yadav stated that the masjid was untouched. On November 2 the Government claimed only five people were killed though newsmen counted 24 bodies. And after October 30 when the Babri Masjid was closed even to the press, two dailies published false reports that damaged portions were being repaired. All in all a dismal performance by both an irresponsible media, and a repressive government. —DILIP AWASTHI

community), why should any of us deny ourselves the chance to risk our lives for Ram ?" He claimed that even the chief minister's close relations had arrived for the kar sewa but didn't want to be identified out of fear and family loyalty.

Besides, the Muslims in the state are feeling equally cornered. Said Aftab Hussain Qureshi, 42, of Lucknow: "Yadav hammered into our minds that our existence is threatened. Today, most of us have started feeling the same." Muslim leaders, however, led by compulsions that are at immediate variance with those of the common Muslims like Qureshi, back Yadav. Said Zafaryab Jilani, convenor of the Babri Masjid Action Committee: "Yadav has done greater service to the Muslims than anyone else in the country. As far as communal hysteria evoked by his stand is concerned, it will die down." Some other Muslim leaders including Labour Minister Mohammed Azam Khan and Abdul Mannan, president of the Muslim Advocates' Forum, too backed Yadav's case.

HOWEVER, the clear evidence against these deceptive flurries of approval and disapprobation is the condition of the state, which saw violence even in laidback Lucknow for the first time since the Partition. At the peak of the agitation, over half the state was under curfew and common items like onions were selling at Rs 15 a kg and LPG cylinders went for premiums ranging from Rs 100 to Rs 200.

To make matters worse, there were also allegations that some of the 1.74 lakh kar sewaks arrested were kept in horrendous conditions in the makeshift jails erected in rest houses, vacated schools and college and university campuses. At least 10 kar sewaks were reported to have "disappeared" from Unnao jail after they were fired upon by the police on October 26. Though some of the allegations may be baseless rumours fuelled by a restless populace subjected to too much tension for too long, even a residue of truth in them is enough to ensure, at the least, Yadav's permanent discomfiture, if not his political doom.

In the prevailing situation it seems touch and go for Mulayam Singh Yadav. The diminutive but doughty chief minister has painted himself into a corner. He is almost a political pariah now, a promising chief minister who betrayed his promises. The state is in chaos and the administration has come to a standstill while the Yadav camp in New Delhi desperately tries to dodge the flak. Even his acknowledged mentor, Prime Minister Chandra Shekhar, might find him too hot to handle and may prefer to watch from the heights of power his protege playing his own worst enemy.

THE NUMBERS GAME

TOTAL SEATS: 425 **CURRENT STRENGTH: 422**

JANATA	CONG(I)	BJP	CPI	CPI(M)	BSP	OTHERS
210	94	55	6	2	13	42

LIKELY POLARISATION

The faction-wise division of Janata Dal: those likely to desert Mulayam Singh Yadav in parentheses:

LOK DAL (A)	JAN MORCHA	JANATA PARTY	LOK DAL (B)
72 (60)	34 (30)	20 (8)	84

Yadav claims the following MLAs will support him in a confidence motion: all those of the CPI, CPI(M), BSP and 14 of the independents.

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Frost



Manscapes *by* Park Avenue

The Pullover. To set ice on fire. And bask in its embers. To let your warmth flow in a never ending stream of humanity.

Park Avenue
by raymonds

Style. It never goes out of fashion.

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other car offers yo
enough space to
six man conferenc
60k.m.p.h.?

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The new Smoothride Suspension features anti-roll bars to minimise body roll, maintenance free ball joints to eliminate vibration and noise, and larger diameter metallastic bushes for better cushioning. Even the bumpiest road won't affect your smooth train of thought.

The new Double Safety Brakes now comprise a tandem master cylinder with independent circuits for each axle. If one fails, the other backs up.

The new Touchlite Steering System incorporates a helical rack and pinion arrangement to greatly reduce your steering effort. In addition the steering column has been ergonomically realigned to eliminate road shock and make driving much easier —(the car's turning diameter is just 10.8 metres). Slide into that last parking space with ease.



The new Easyshift Clutch now has a diaphragm that allows you to change gears with much less pedal effort.

New Formed Wire Spring Seats give you much firmer cushioning and greater riding comfort. New 30 cms (12") Wipers and redesigned Weather Strips can take on the worst storm. A Reoptimised Carburettor gives improved fuel economy. And new Asymetric Head Lamps delight you with powerfully increased visibility at night.

The Ambassador Nova — all in all a rather easy decision to take.

AMBASSADOR
NOVA

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DOUBLE SAFETY BRAKES
SMOOTHRIDE SUSPENSION
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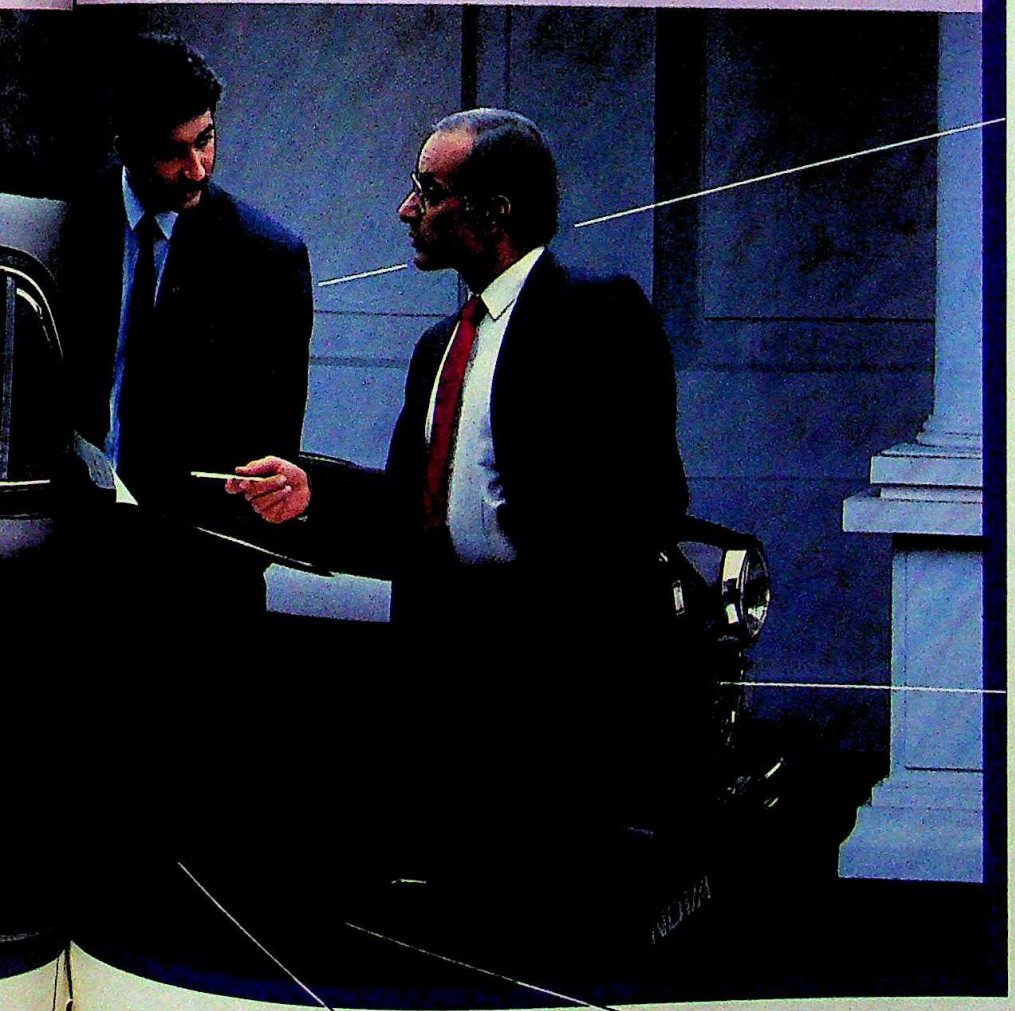
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New Double Safety Brakes give you much surer stopping power. Think of it as a backup insurance policy.

The new Smoothride Suspension neutralises the roughest road. You simply glide home after a hard day's work.

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Chancellor

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THE PARSIS

A Crisis of Identity

Controversy over women's rights gains momentum

THE last thing members of India's Parsi community ever do is wash their dirty linen in public. It's a tired old cliche to say they are perhaps the most cohesive and self-contained fraternity in the entire country. But at the latest annual gathering of Parsi youth held at the end of October in Secunderabad, the main event at the three-day festival was the very public washing of some very grubby linen.

The Festival of All-India Zoroastrian Youth was convulsed by the controversy surrounding the death of Roxan Darshan Shah, a young Parsi woman in Bombay. Before the 25-year-old Roxan died she asked that her body be dealt with according to traditional Parsi rites. The religious elders of the community refused her final wish. The reason? She had married a Hindu.

An unedifying squabble over the rights and status of women who marry outside the community has been raging since Roxan's death three months ago. She married her Hindu husband under the Special Marriages Act of 1954 but continued to practise her faith and perform its rituals, including visiting the fire temple. Before her death, she asked for her body to be consigned to the *Dungarwadi* or Tower of Silence.

Why she made such a request is unclear for if one thing is inculcated into all Parsi women from childhood it is that they forfeit all their rights the moment they marry a non-Parsi. Nor are the offspring of such a marriage considered to be Parsi. But this attitude is now being scrutinised afresh.

According to Dr Aspi Golwala, chairman of the board of trustees of the powerful Bombay Parsi Panchayat, Roxan's wish could not be respected because it violated basic Parsi law. For the orthodox, it's irrelevant that she married under civil marriage law and not Hindu law.

Predictably, liberals in the community were shocked when the panchayat refused to budge an inch over the affair. They were even more scandalised when one of the community's most senior priests, Dastoor Kotwal, went further and announced that any Parsi woman marrying a non-Parsi was guilty of adultery and her children were illegitimate.

For many Parsi women, it's a predictably dreary case of discrimination by a patriarchal religious hierarchy. But there are also women who support the status quo. At the Secunderabad festival, a Bombay-based solicitor, Bapsy Dastur, told the gathering: "The case of those marrying outside the community is similar to painter M.F. Husain coming barefoot to Bombay's Willingdon Club. Naturally, they will be refused entry."

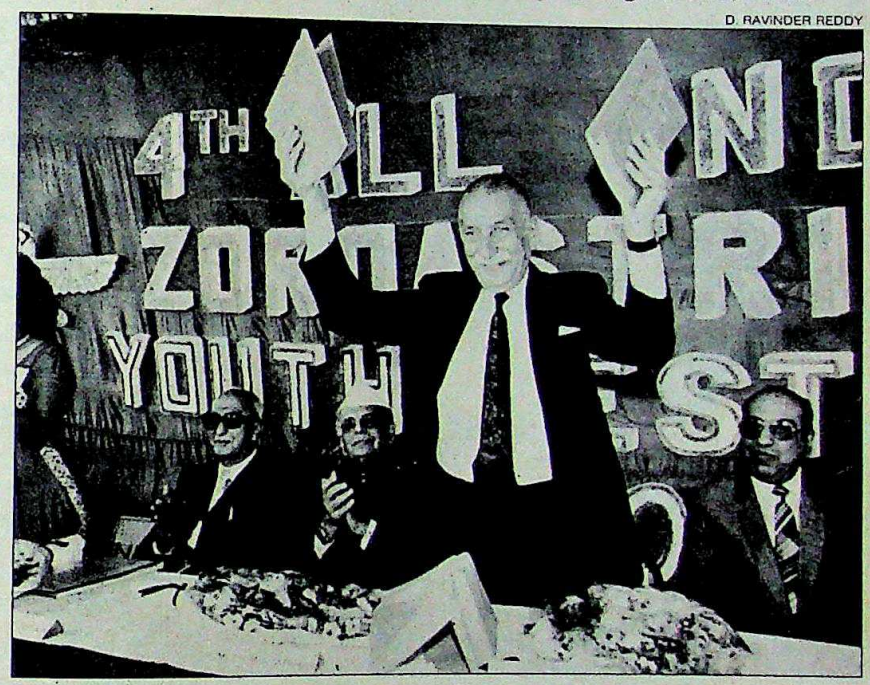
For others it's a question of survival. Social worker Maruk Mobedji says: "Changing community practices without understanding their full implications is likely to deepen the Parsi crisis of identity."

It boils down to numbers. The Parsi community has steadily dwindled from 91,226 in 1971 to 71,630 in 1981. And the numbers are expected to come down still further to around 57,000 by the next year.

But do more and more Parsi women seem to be marrying outside their community? Nazneen Toorkey, an executive with a Secunderabad firm, feels that many Parsi men are much too happy living cushy lives off the proceeds of the hundreds of trusts left by their prosperous forefathers.

Field Marshal Maneckshaw addressing the annual meet

D. RAVINDER REDDY



> The youths at the meet were angry that the community had denied Roxan her death rights.

believed to be worth about Rs 30 crore. Says Nazneen: "This forces Parsi women to find more responsible and dynamic men outside the community."

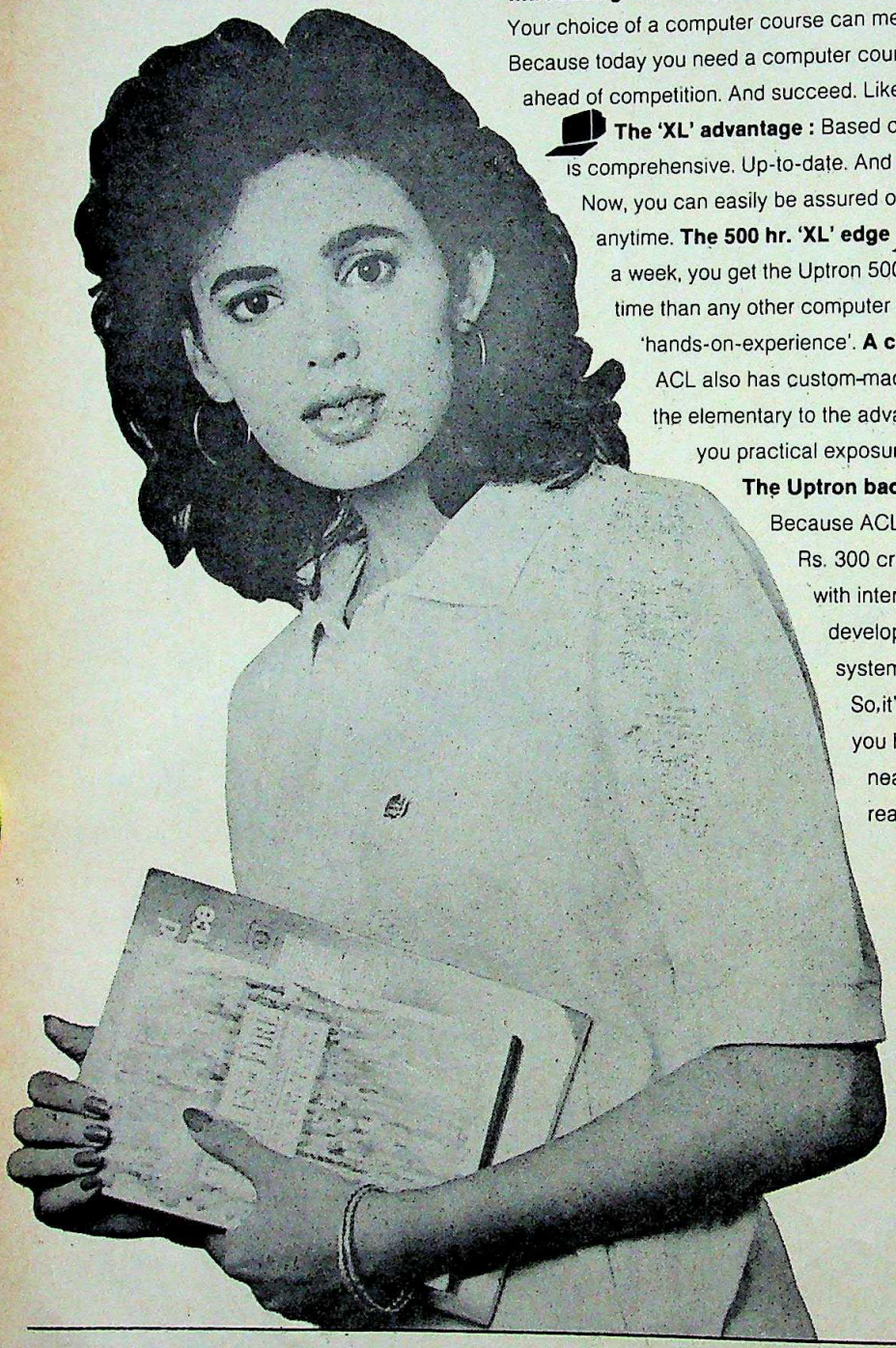
As the debate continues, the Bombay Parsi Panchayat has called in the lawyers. It wants to consider legal opinion on exogamy. Panchayat Chairman, Aspi Golwala, told INDIA TODAY that any change in the status of Parsi women marrying outside the faith would be made only after the lawyers had been consulted. Considering the watertight conventions of the Parsi community, whatever the verdict the controversy is bound to continue. As for Roxan, her mortal remains were eventually cremated.

—AMARNATH K. MENON

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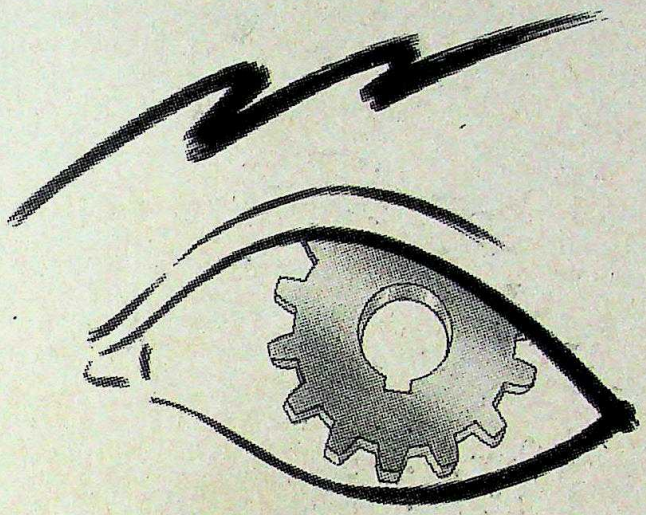
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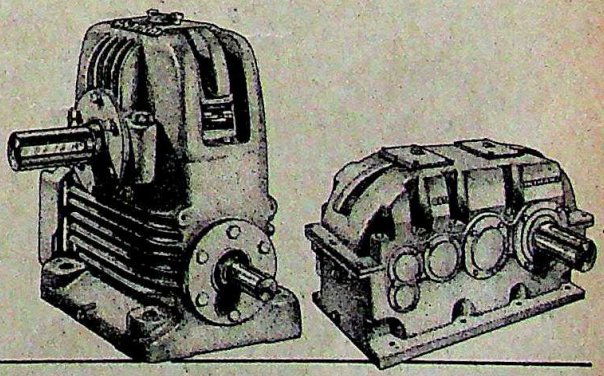
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The Nuclear Threat

SCENARIO: Pakistan has escalated its efforts at subversion and guerrilla warfare in Jammu and Kashmir to a high pitch. Though technically still covert, its involvement is almost open. Pakistan has also threatened that if India goes through with its declared conventional strategy of carrying the war into Pakistan's territory in the plains, all means would be used to defeat, implying the use of nuclear weapons. Will India go through with its conventional counter-offensive in the plains? Will Pakistan's nuclear bluff be called? What if it is not a bluff and nuclear weapon use is initiated by Pakistan? How would this crisis be managed and terminated on a politically acceptable basis, with minimum damage all round? This is a totally new and potentially highly dangerous situation. It is high time that the politician, the bureaucrat, the serviceman and most essentially the citizen gives this a thought. Shying away from an unpleasant possibility is not going to change reality. Thinking it through on the other hand, by both Pakistan and India, will result in more mature and responsible decision-making by both.



When both the countries have nuclear capability, the leaders must realise that any act that threatens the interests of the other side will set off responses which may end in a nuclear exchange.

It is unthinkable that any government in India, however weak and whatever be the situation of national dissension and strife in the country, can succumb to Pakistan's nuclear blackmail and confine itself to defensive actions in Jammu and Kashmir. It will not survive politically. It is realistic to assume that Pakistan has a nuclear capability, which, though in American eyes is 'certifiably' weaponless, could at short order produce usable weapons. The Indian citizen has every right to expect that India, having mastered the technology in 1974, is in the year of grace 1990, also only 'certifiably' weaponless. He would expect India, very short order, to have usable nuclear weapons also, if required. So, we will drop the possibility of nuclear asymmetry between India and Pakistan and analyse the other assumption.

India takes appropriate defensive/offensive measures in Jammu and Kashmir, and also launches its conventional counter-offensives in the plains. One possibility is that Pakistan defends conventionally and desists from using nukes. This scenario is unlikely especially if the Indian counter stroke makes good progress; however, for this gamin, I shall drop it. The other course is for Pakistan to actually use nuclear weapons. Let us analyse this further. The least provocative could be a demonstrative strike, maybe after warning and indicating the target area, to minimise damage (a recent US study even suggests a weapon test). I believe that this is least likely, as it would unveil Pakistan's nuke weapon capability and permit the Indians to follow suit. This would be to Pakistan's disadvantage. The next level would be to fire nukes at a battlefield target, say an Indian lodgement in their territory. This is technically feasible. Most tactical area targets are best attacked by 'low airburst' weapons, the fireballs of which by definition do not touch the surface, and would produce no fall-out and minimal residual radioactivity. This would, of course, assume that the Pakistani weapon has a predictable yield and a reliable fusing system. This may keep the inevitable Indian response confined to a battlefield target; on the other hand once Pakistan has crossed the rubicon, the Indian response might be aimed at degrading to the extent possible, Pakistan's nuclear escalatory capability. Even if it confines itself to counterforce targets, in nuclear weapons and delivery means, the collateral civilian damage would be considerable.

THEREFORE, Pakistan might from the outset decide to degrade to the extent possible, India's nuclear second-strike (i.e. retaliatory) capability. This would also cause considerable collateral damage. Guesstimates of the likely stockpiles of fissionable material/weapons on both sides have been speculated upon, as also the multiple means of delivery available to India. However escalation takes place, it is certain that India can end up doing relatively more damage to Pakistan than the other way round. But the absolute damage to both sides would be considerable. Say one or five Hiroshima/Nagasakis worth in India and 10 or 15 such in Pakistan. This would not automatically endanger the earth, but would still cause horrendous damage.

When there is nuclear weapon capability in both countries, it is a whole new ball game. The 'ground rules' have changed drastically, as the damage potential of war has gone up astronomically. Leaders on both sides have to understand that any act which threatens the core vital interests of the other side will trigger off responses which may end in a nuclear exchange. Attempting to change the status quo territorially by blatant covert operations; or destabilising or balkanising one another by overt conventional operations; all these fall in that category. These can no longer be considered policy options. A change in capability, as dramatic as acquiring nuclear weapons has to be accompanied by an understanding of the consequences and concomitant changes in policies and doctrines. If there is undue time lag between the two, it would be a period pregnant with danger. Strategies of uncertainty may be aimed at third parties, but there needs to be a degree of certainty of each other's capabilities on the part of potential adversaries. Or gross miscalculations may result. How can we minimise these dangers? How can we send unambiguous deterrent signals to each other? These are vital issues which demand urgent attention and further analysis.

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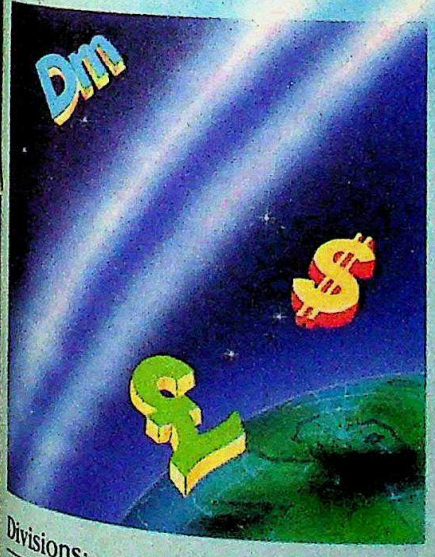
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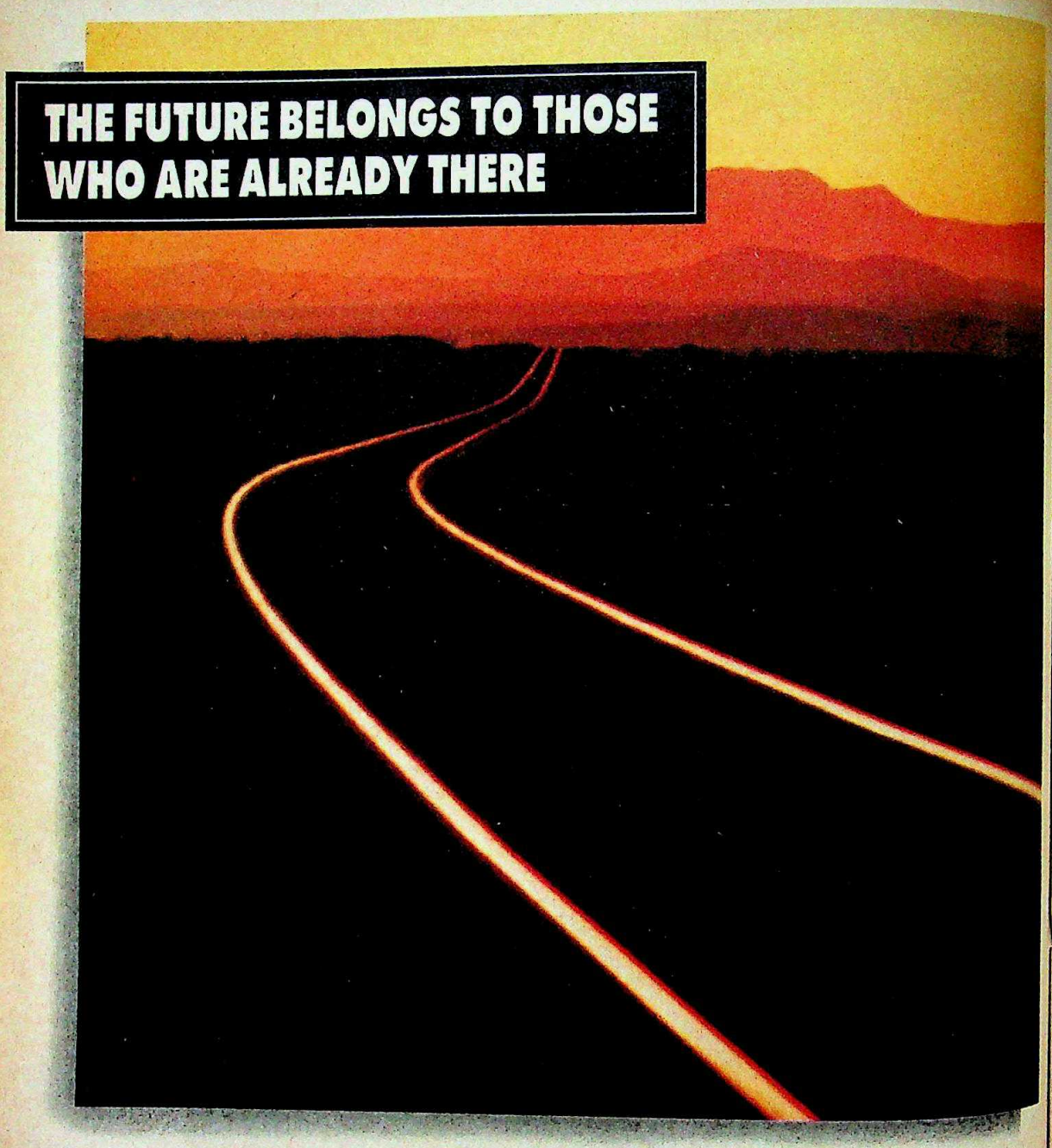
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CENTURY

National perspective – Global vision.

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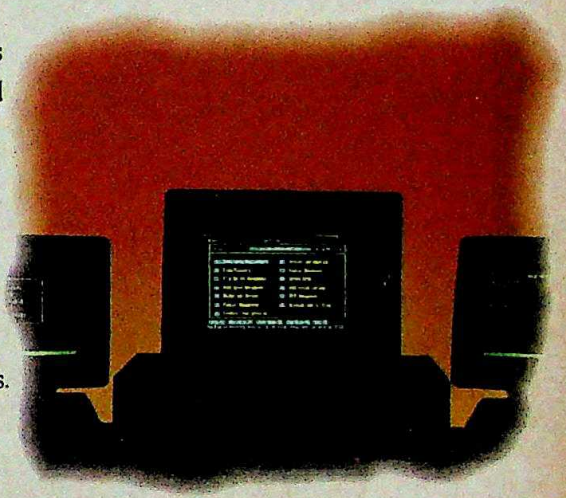
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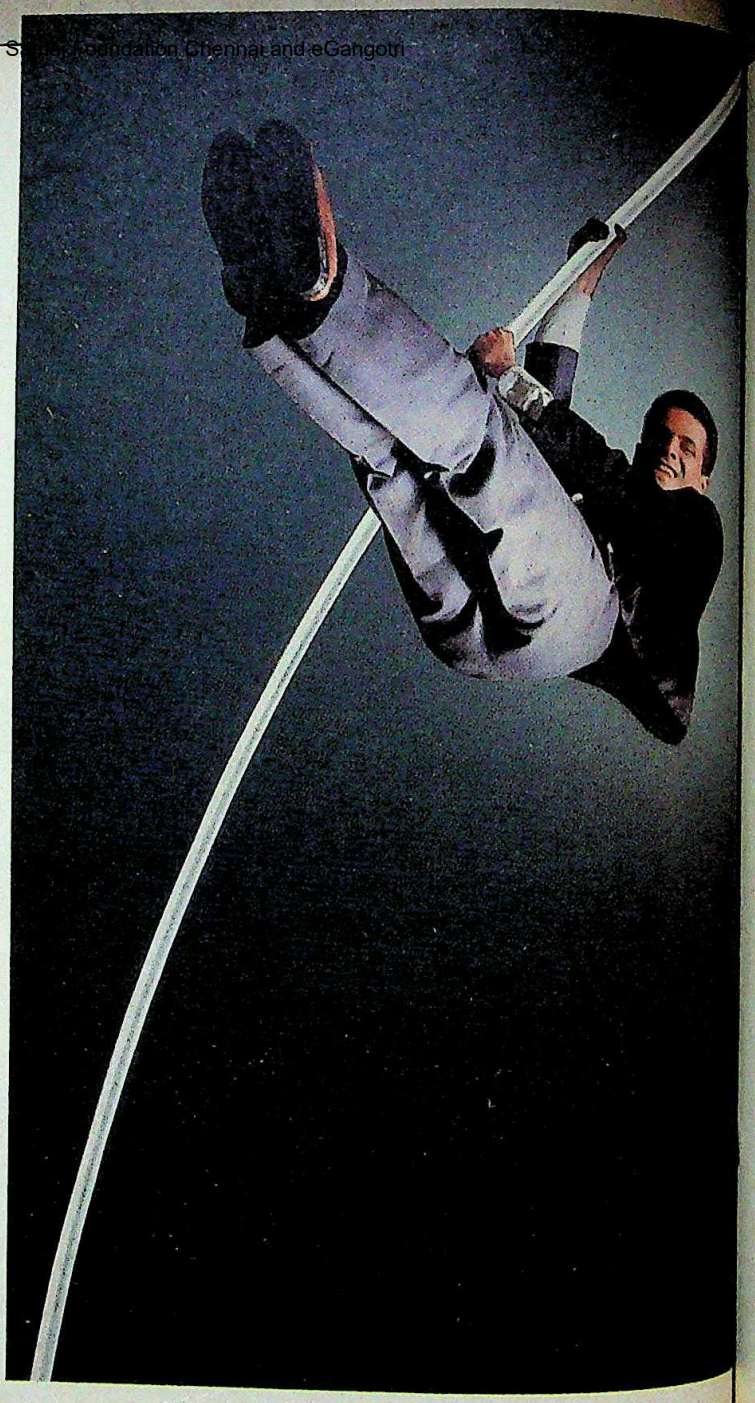
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THE REWARD, MY FRIEND, IS NOT IN THE SIZE OF THE ORDER BUT IN THE CHALLENGE OF THE JOB.



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Profits, Kirloskar Electric never forgets, are not the primary function of any business. They are a by-product. Go out on a limb for your customers and you not only build technological muscle,the whole country gains confidence to take on more and more challenging jobs. And the odd thing is, if you look after the product, the profits take care of themselves.

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LMW are one of India's leading manufacturers of textile machinery. In 1983, they asked us to build AC dual speed motorised gear units for their doffer machines, most of which are exported. So far they had been importing these motors from Bauer of Germany.

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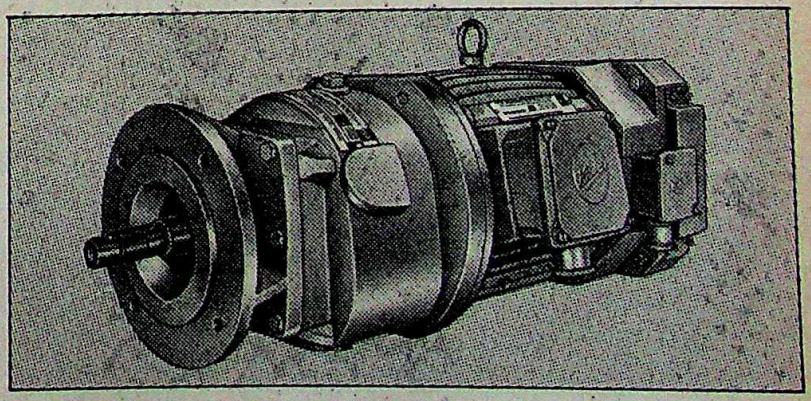
The tougher the job, the more we want to do it. We got down to business. When we had got the prototype for the motorised gear units ready, we realized that it could be made even more compact. We re-worked on the prototype till its compactness was as close to the imported ones as possible.

But it was the gear cases which posed the biggest problem for us. Being so compact, they demanded maximum accuracies. It was touch and go there for a while but we licked the problem in the end.

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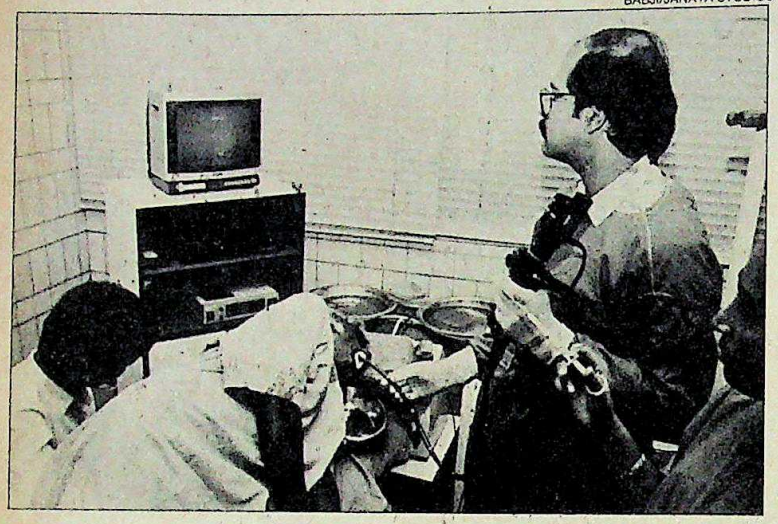
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ENDOSCOPY

The Painless Wonder

Keyhole surgery gains widespread acceptance

BABJI/JANATA STUDIOS



Dr Reddy performing endoscopy

ANNAPURNA, 45, did not have any option but to go in for a surgery five years ago because of recurring abdominal pains after a meal. The problem seemed to be obstructive jaundice, a condition in which stones block the duct carrying the bile. The accepted treatment then was to open the abdomen and go at the stones with a scalpel. Her first operation went well. Last month, the problem surfaced again. This time she chose to visit an endoscopist. He inserted a chord called the side-viewing endoscope to spot the stones, then crushed them and flushed them out.

Ramulu, 50, had a seemingly simple problem. He was not able to swallow anything. There were blocks in the food pipe (oesophagus) due to a cancerous growth. The chances of his surviving surgery were not bright. So he opted for therapeutic endoscopy that makes it possible not only to clear the blocks but even put an artificial tube called endoprostheses in place of the blocked length of the food pipe.

Rama Rao, 40, rushed to the endoscopist complaining of bleeding and recalled his family history of cancer. A close look at the colon (large intestines) showed the formation of polyps. The endoscopist sent in a snare to trap and remove the polyps. The bleeding stopped and the formation of cancer in the colon was prevented.

For all the diseases plaguing the digestive system, from the pharynx down to the oesophagus to the stomach and through the coiling small and large intestines, the only way to remove the blocks or cancerous growth has been to wheel the patient into the operation theatre for open surgery. All that is changing with the use of the more elegant technique of therapeutic endoscopy now being widely used in India, though it has been popular abroad for much longer.

> **Therapeutic endoscopy is the less painful, less expensive way of removing polyps and stones in the digestive tract.**

At a few centres skilled gastroenterologists are busy demonstrating that there is a less painful, less expensive way of treating tumours, cancers, ulcers and other blockages of the gastrointestinal tract. Progress in fibre optics has helped them to view directly the insides of the digestive tract on a TV monitor and send down micro instruments to treat the problem.

For this the gastroenterologists send a thin fibre optic cable with a tiny computer chip at the end through the mouth or the rectum to beam back pictures of the problem area. Alongside is another channel through which the instruments are sent to treat the affected part. Tiny knives to cut the malignant growth and clear the blocks, micro-hammers to crush stones, special balloons to expand the area around ulcers and endoprostheses to replace the original ones are sent in to help smoothen the flow.

Three different types of endoscopes are used depending on which area of the tract is affected. In Hyderabad, adding the plastic pipe costs Rs 500 and stone removal Rs 2,000 while in Madras the same treatment costs Rs 2,000 and Rs 6,000 respectively. The difference is mainly because materials used are made in Hyderabad and are therefore cheaper. Rates can only get cheaper as more instruments come in.

"In another 10 years more than half the problems and diseases of the gastrointestinal tract will be done by therapeutic endoscopy," says Dr D. Nageshwar Reddy, consultant Gastroenterologist of the Medinova Diagnostic Services Centre, Hyderabad, easily the busiest of the six centres offering specialised keyhole surgery in India. It is the several advantages of therapeutic endoscopy of the gastrointestinal system over conventional surgery that is making it popular. There is no need for anaesthesia, minimal loss of blood, and lesser chances of infection as the issues are not handled directly. And most of all there is no need of hospitalisation as the patient can walk out of the endoscopy surgery centres. This, naturally, also results in substantial savings on medical expenses.

All this is of considerable interest since at least 40 per cent of the patients visiting a physician at any time of the year complain of problems of the digestive system. The only major constraint is the shortage of skilled specialists. The mastering of therapeutic endoscopy techniques can take five years of practice and in England and America one of every nine doctors is trained in it. Though it may be some time before it is easily available to everyone in India, a start has certainly been made. And as more and more doctors learn to work on the new endoscopy instruments there need no longer be the fear of stomachs being torn open to remove stones and minor polyps. And hideous scars being left as evidence.

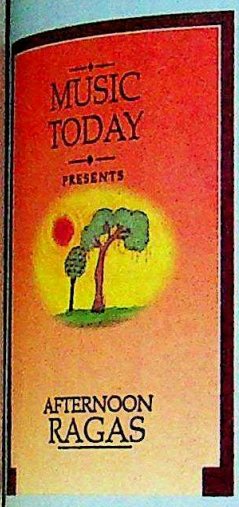
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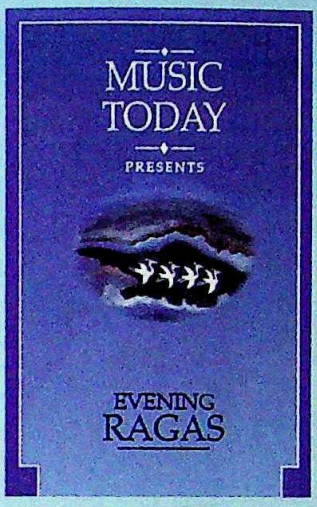


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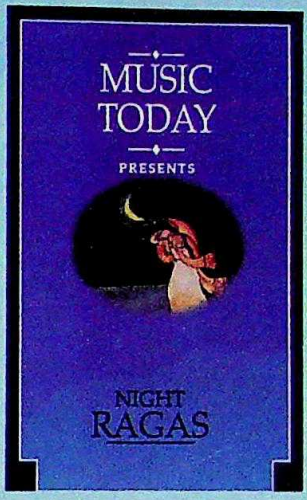


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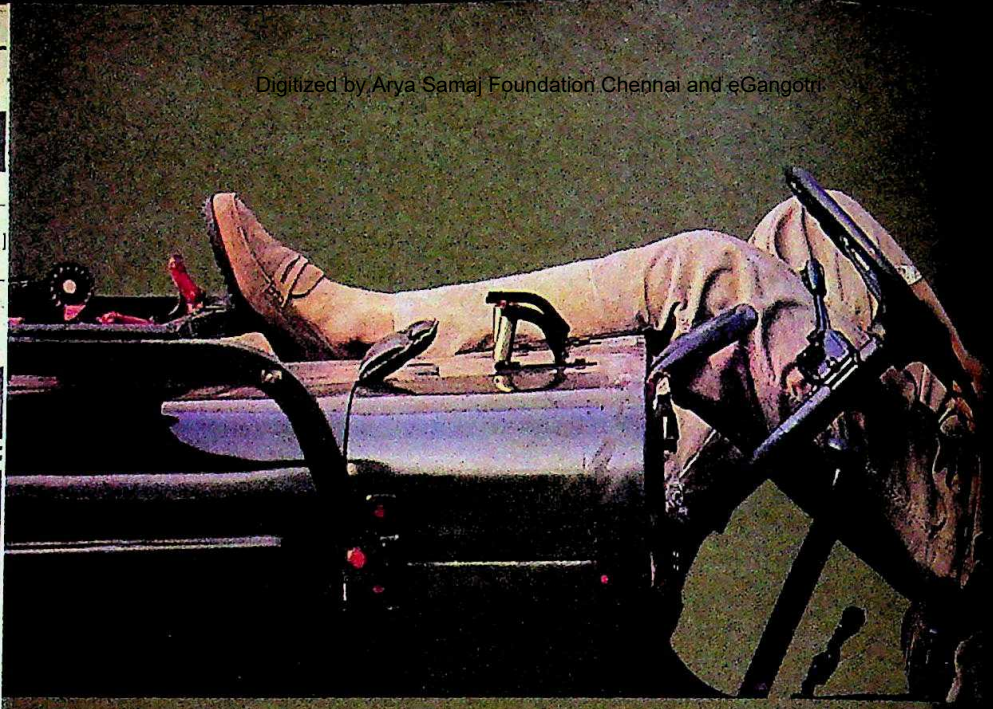
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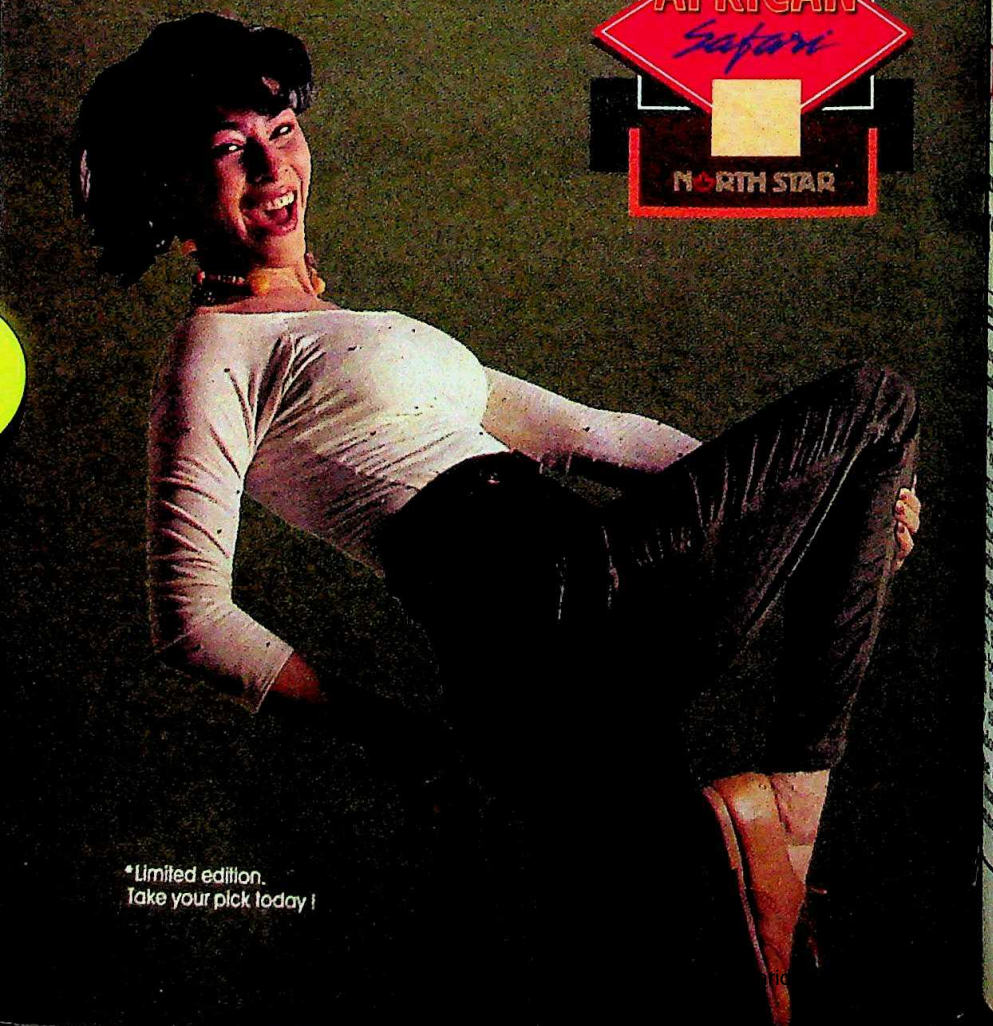
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burial vaults

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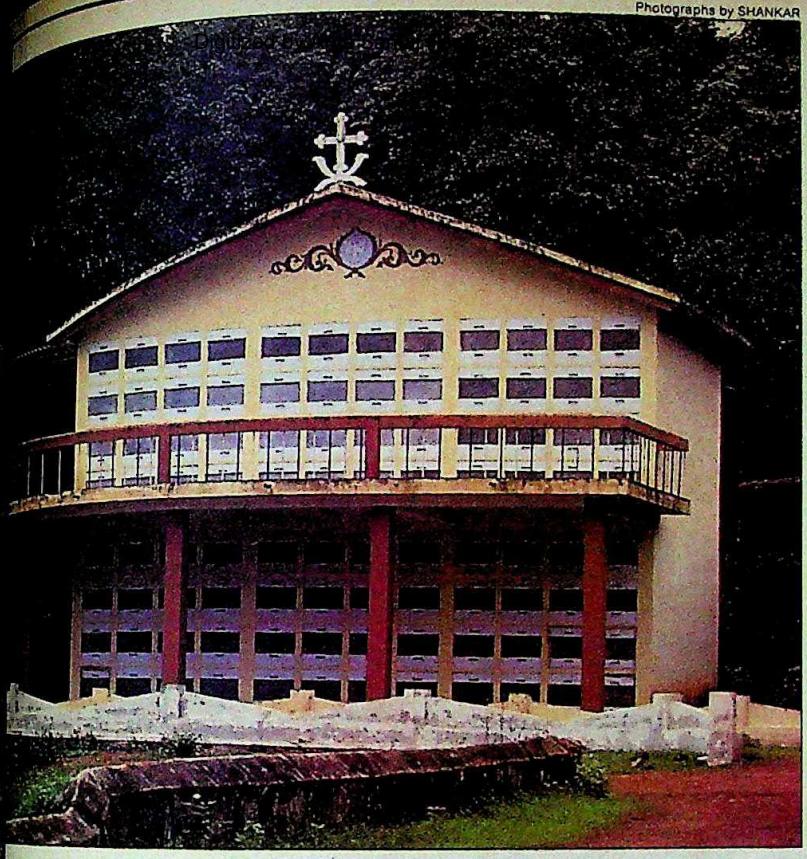
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Photographs by SHANKAR



burial vaults in a Kerala church: a revolutionary change

CEMETERIES

rying a Ritual

ing space crunch in the graveyards of Kerala, innovative ete vaults are now being used to bury the dead.

and remind the awe-struck passerby of distant ages became the symbol of man's way of mocking at death.

However now the graveyards are all full of tombs and there is no space for more. Definitely in Kerala where the palm-fringed landscape is dotted with spires and churches and the density of population is the highest in the country—700 per square kilometre, with Christians constituting about 6 million of the state's 26 million population. But now there is a new way to bury the dead: huge concrete vaults into which the coffin is shoved. Families buy up the last few square inches of precious earth in the graveyards and build vaults in many layers.

The system is simple. Instead of placing the coffin in a grave and sprinkling dust over it in a symbolic re-creation of God's words, the body is put into a concrete vault which is sealed with cement. When the vault is opened for a second coffin, the bones from the previous burial get pushed to the back and fall into a deep covered well. These vaults can be used for decades. In the course of time, even bones lying at the bottom of the well turn into dust. Points out Reverend George Alexander, Vicar, St Thomas Church, Tiruvalla: "Initially, there was stiff resistance to the idea as all wanted tombs built over graves for memory's sake."

But the idea of setting up vaults was almost overdue. In recent years, most cemeteries especially in the Christian dominated areas like Tiruvalla, Chengenacherry, Kozhencherry and Kottayam had been facing a crisis of space. No one knows whose brain

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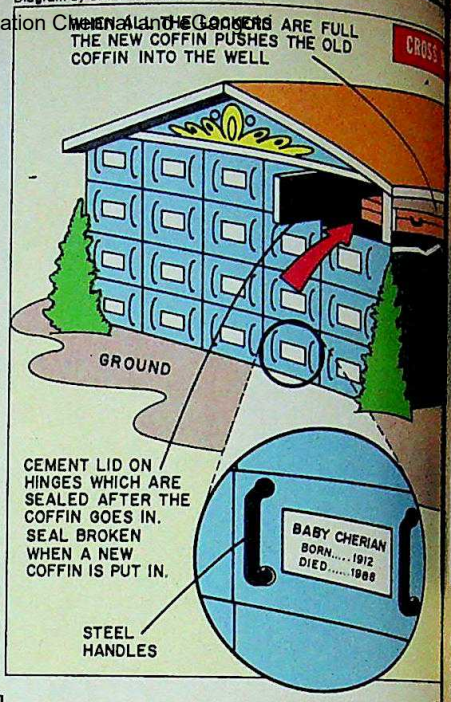
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child the right way, but it caught on fast. Says Reverend T.J. Thomas, counsellor, T.M.A. Counselling Centre, Amalagiri: "Common burials are getting uncommon. Even the rich will have to opt for vault burial in another couple of years."

INITIALLY, many recoiled from what seemed a blasphemous idea. Reverend K.K. Thomas, Vicar, Marthoma church, Maramon, recalls that even after they had introduced the vault burial, many would insist on traditional burial. They wanted it as stated in the Bible—from dust to dust—perhaps fearing that their soul would not be able to rest in peace inside a cement locker.

Most Christians now realise how pragmatic it is. Even rich families cannot buy space for individual graves as many churches refuse permission even for fancy amounts. So more and more families are now constructing family vaults but again only where churches are ready to sell space. In crowded cemeteries where a multi-vault burial system has been built, some vaults are reserved for sale to families. Out of the 36 vaults that the St Thomas Church in Tiruvalla has built, the topmost row of 12 vaults has been reserved for sale to families.

Diagram by B.K. SHARMA



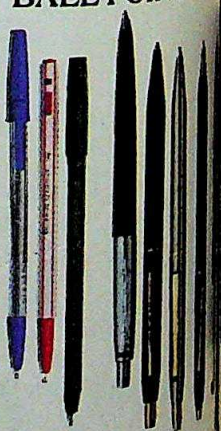
The cost of the vaults will differ with those living in urban areas obviously having to pay more. Each vault

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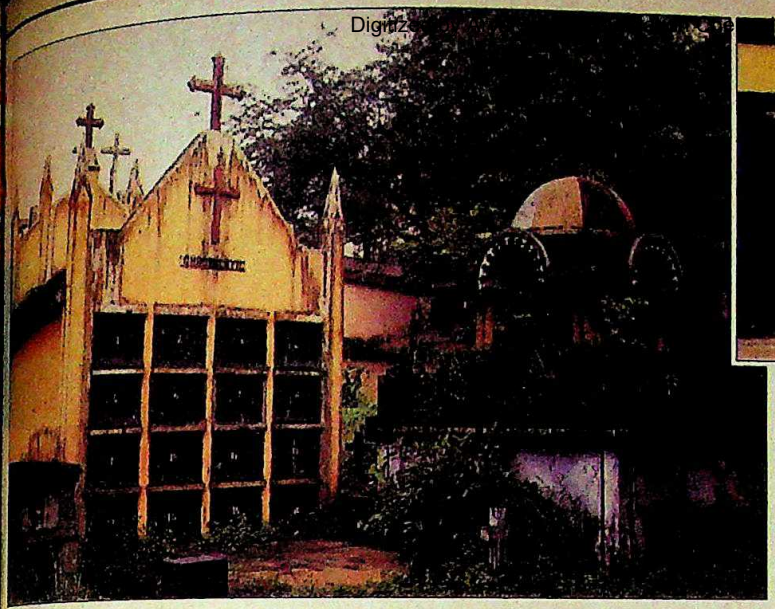
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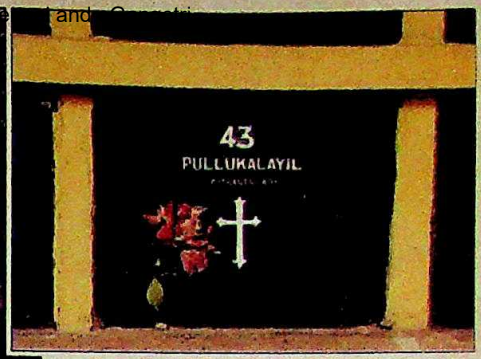
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Vaults belonging to a family; and (above) a close-up of a vault

Affluent familes are going in for their own family graves, aghast at the very thought of their bones mingling with those of lesser mortals. Says Joseph Pulikkunel, secretary, Kerala Catholic Laity Association: "Even after death people want to retain their socio-economic status and that is why they insist on being put into a family grave." *Hosanna*, a religious monthly edited by him decries the snobbish culture of setting up elaborate family graves.

A typical family grave has about four to six vaults with its design the same as that of a common vault. Some family graves even resemble houses with balconies, and a well-designed unit with stone tablets has become a status symbol. The names of those buried in the common vault will however not be mumbled in awe ages hence as there are no tablets.

Some churches like the St Thomas Church in Tiruvalla are however planning to satisfy this primordial urge to be carved in stone by placing a huge tablet atop or on the sides of the graves with the names of those buried there. This will have to be done as huge multi-tier vaults will soon be in operation. The Elia Cathedral in Kottayam has already built a two storeyed structure with 96 vaults.

Elsewhere in thickly Christian populated areas like Maramon, the Marthoma church has set up around 100

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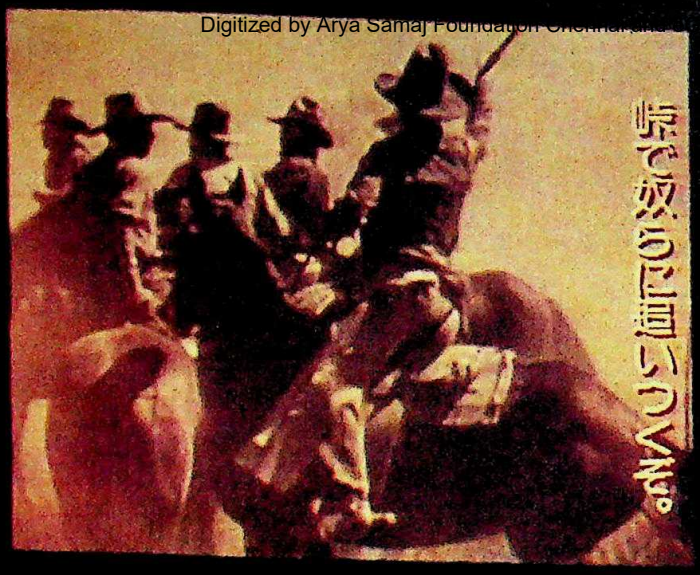
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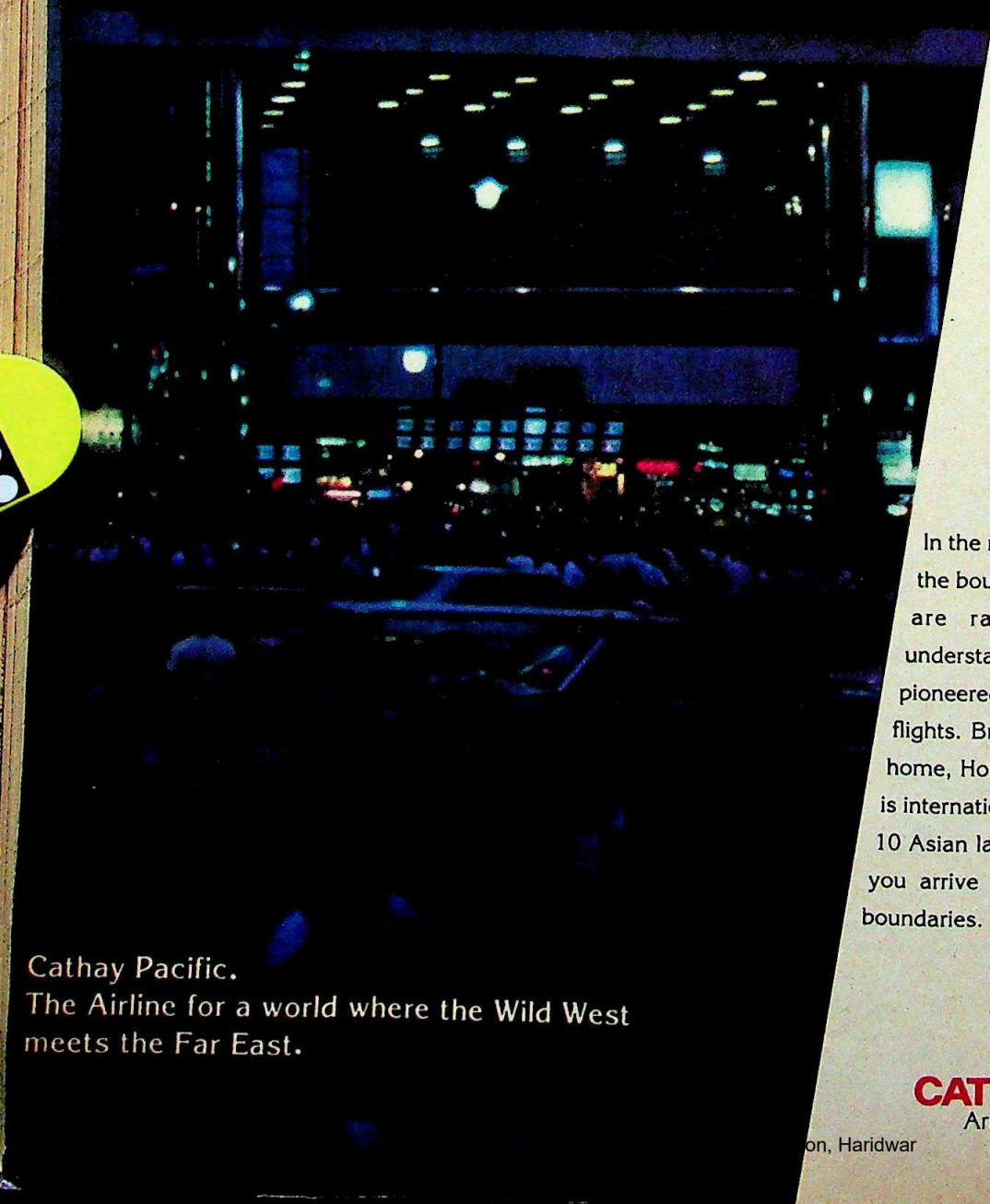
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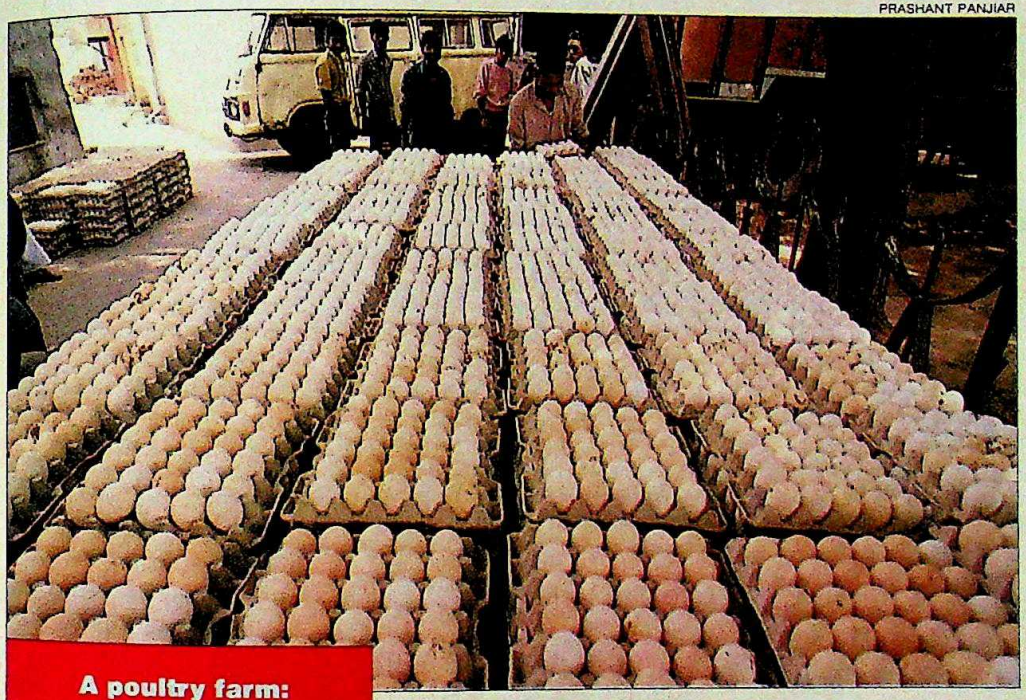
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POULTRY INDUSTRY

Spreading its Wings

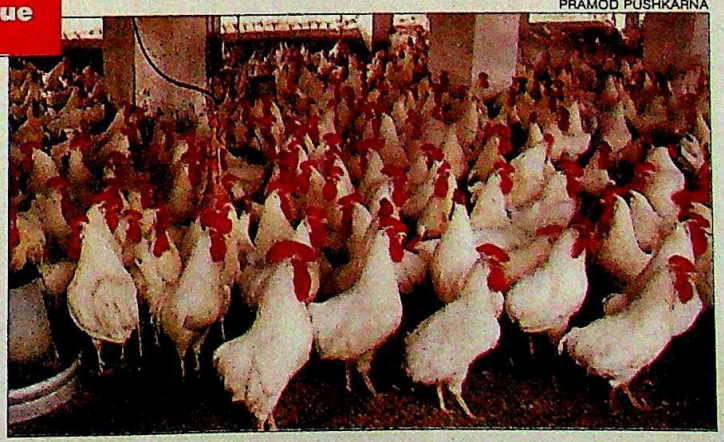
Despite problems caused by the import policy and the turbulent political situation, the egg industry is growing at a rapid rate.

PRASHANT PANJIAR



A poultry farm: entering the big league

PRAMOD PUSHKARNA



By ALOK TIWARI

EGGS are great, eggs are fun, eggs are good for everyone: that's how the familiar jingle on television went. And Indians seemed to agree wholeheartedly. Last year, they consumed over 22 billion eggs as the country scrambled into the big league of the international poultry scene.

Consider the figures: egg production in India was around 12.5 billion in 1981; in 1989, it went up to 22.8 billion. During the same period, poultry meat production rose from an estimated 1.3 lakh tonnes to 3.25 lakh tonnes. And now, India is the fifth largest producer of eggs in the world after China, the Soviet Union, the US, and Japan.

For the industry, however, not all of this is good news. The turbulent situation in Kashmir and the anti-Mandal agitation severely hit poultry farmers in north India. Each day, they used to send about 50,000 broiler chickens and cull birds and two to three lakh eggs to Kashmir. Now as that market has become unavailable, prices have crashed.

The anti-Mandal agitation also disrupted supplies to hatcheries in Haryana leading to increased mortality. Though the market has now stabilised and the prices improved, the uncertainty remains.

There have been other glitches as well. In September, newspaper reports that many poultry farms in north India were infected by strains of salmonella bacterium led to a bitter controversy and a crash in demand for eggs. Then a government decision to disallow imports of grand parent stock (from which commercial chicks are bred) split the industry into lobbies of grand parent importers and indigenous pure-line breeders.

Says Arun Goyle of Essex Farms, who leads the importers' lobby: "The

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B. VENKATESHWARA RAO

Rao, 55, chairman of Venkateshwara Hatcheries Ltd (VHL), started his career in 1969 with a poultry farm at Hyderabad. Two years later he set up VHL.

Today it is the industry's undisputed leader. Apart from poultry breeding, VHL also manufactures feed, animal health products, poultry equipment and processed chicken products (Venky's chicken).

With a turnover of Rs 175 crore, VHL claims a 75 per cent market share in broiler chicks and 50 per cent in layer chicks.

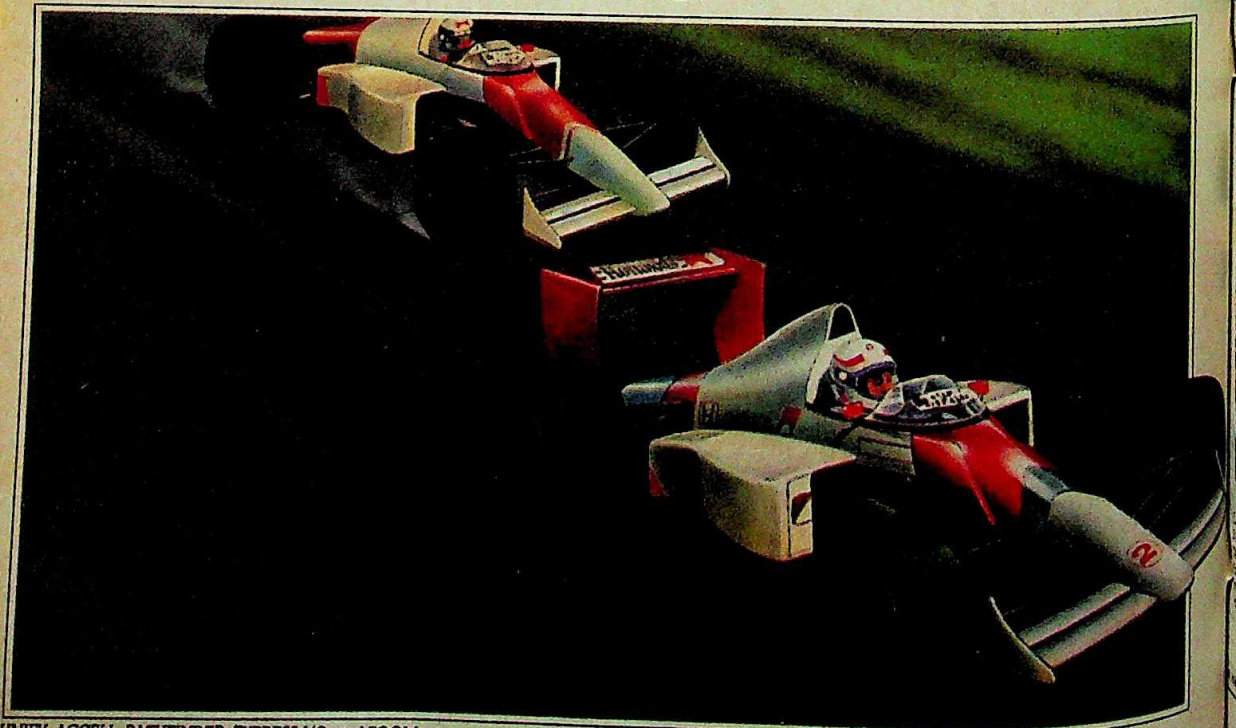


poultry farmers must have a wider choice since the quality of many indigenous pure line breeders is often suspect." Counters Vinod Kapur of Kegg Farms, a leader of the pure line lobby: "We are not afraid of competition provided it is fair." He emphatically states that the Government must charge a uniform rate of duty over import of grand parents—a reference to raids on hatcheries earlier this year which revealed under-invoicing of imported stocks to evade custom duty.

DESPITE that, the industry has chalked up remarkable growth. What makes it even more important is the fact that with production of pulses stagnating at around 13 million tonnes, poultry comes as a viable alternative to fill the protein gap. In 1951, Indians ate an average of just five eggs a year. Now, with a doubled population, the average is more than 28.

But how has the poultry revolution come about? By a combination of technology, entrepreneurship and opportunity. Traditionally, poultry in India has been a backyard operation for crop farmers. Not any longer. An average-sized poultry farm today counts its birds

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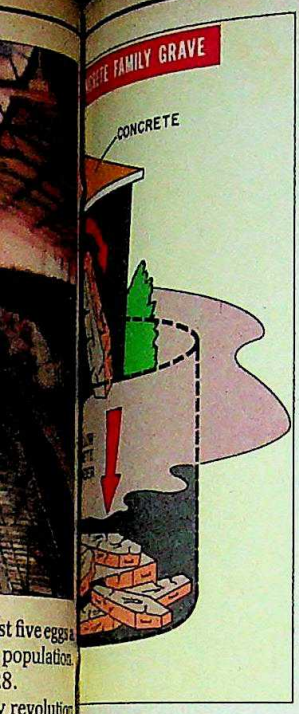


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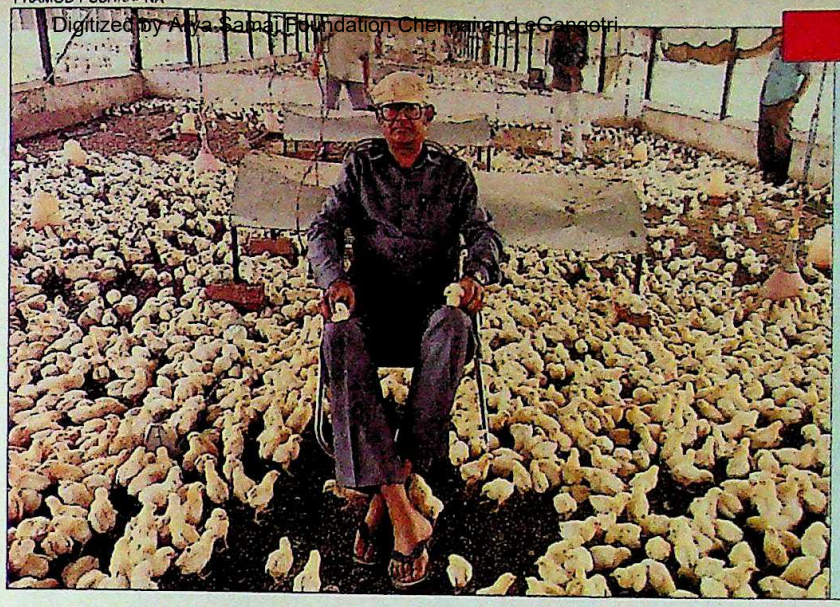
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In 1985, w started a pou Haryana. To about one la turnover—Rs year—is now

The Sethi with Poultry rael to produc H&N Interna pure line bre

in hundreds if not thousands. Many farms in the country have 25,000 to 30,000 birds and some even as many as a couple of lakh.

With total investment in the poultry sector around Rs 1,400 crore, it now annually contributes about Rs 2,200 crore to the GNP. Says Dr R.M. Acharya, deputy director-general of the Indian Council for Agricultural Research: "Apart from dairy processing, poultry is the only agricultural activity undertaken on an industrial scale."

THIS is more so in hatcheries which supply egg-laying and broiler chickens to poultry farms. Hatcheries today are big business and boast of the services of veterinarians, geneticists and professional farm managers.

The early s into the indust beginning can when stocks o ported to impr then, indigeno adoption of s revolutionised Kuldeep Singh, Venkateshwar

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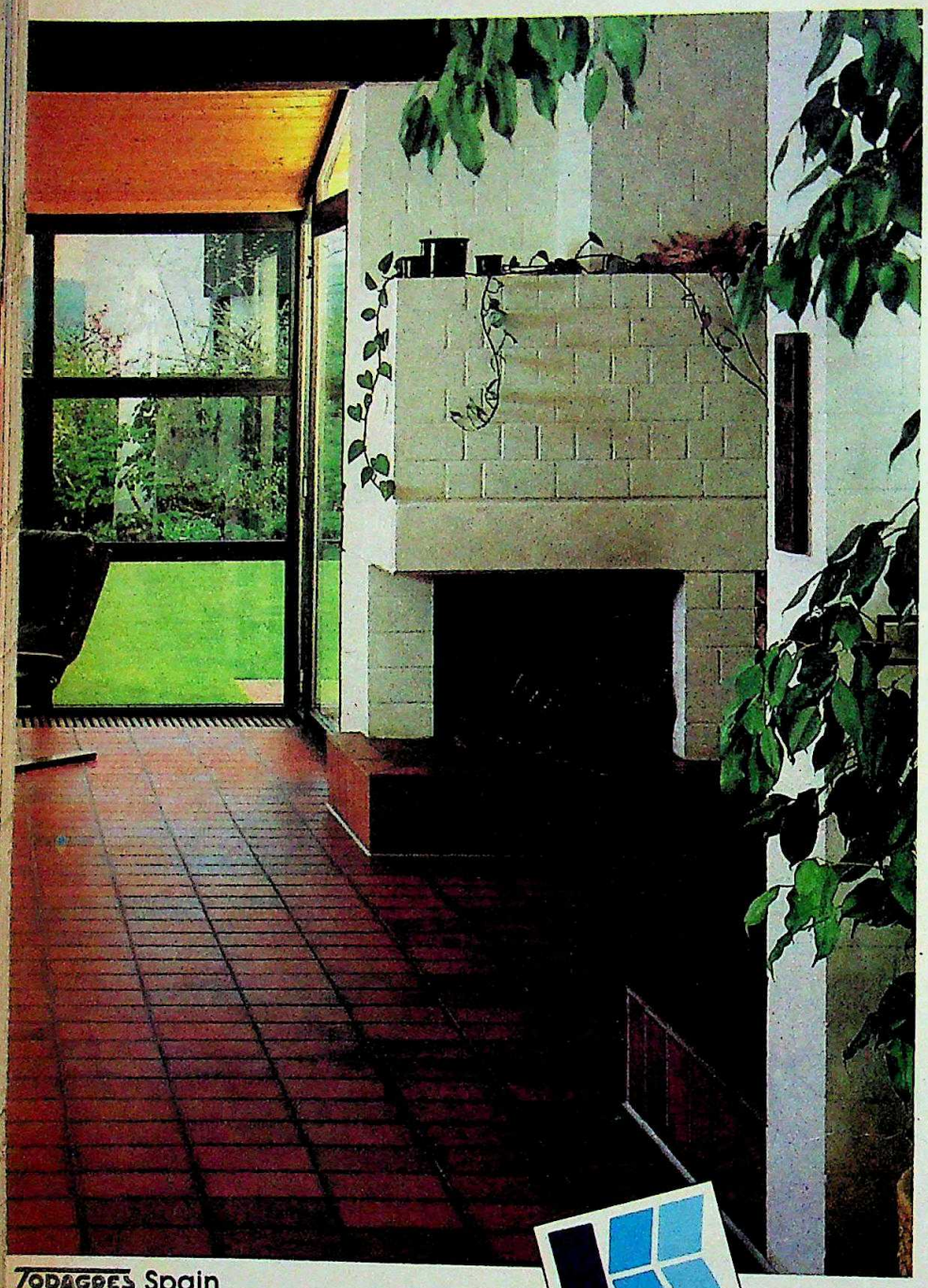
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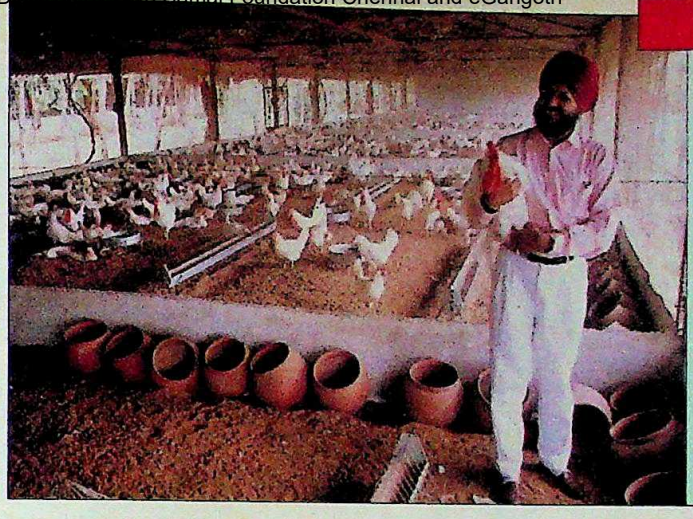
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HARBANS SI

Singh, 48, owne rector of Hyderabad try Limited, started ery. He expanded to feeds. His feed-m produce approximat year. From Rs 25 lakh a Rs 11 crore turnov

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we now produce in India are better than the ones we imported from the US."

He has reason to feel elated. Thirty years ago, hens in India laid 50 to 60 eggs a year. Now they can produce up to 300 eggs a year. And a broiler chicken grows to its full weight of about 1.5 kg in just six to eight weeks.

This is not all. India now not only produces most of the vaccines needed for the healthy upkeep of flocks but also exports them. The technology to produce specific pathogen-free eggs—vital for making human vaccines—is now available in the country.

Besides, employment potential in the industry is immense. There are an estimated 60,000 poultry farmers in the country and the poultry sector provides employment to more than half a million people.

Not going in for mechanisation has actually helped Indian poultry achieve better results than its counterparts in the developed world. Says Ron Caspi, an Israeli poultry geneticist: "Chickens need human beings to look after them, machines cannot do that."

However, in spite of being one of the largest producers of eggs, per capita consumption in India remains abysmally low as compared to the 180 eggs a year that nutritionists recommend. Getting Indians to eat eggs has not been easy. The National Egg Coordination Committee (NECC), a poultry farmers' body formed in 1982, found that eating habits were governed as much by religion and prejudice as by price and availability.

In north India, eggs are shunned in the summer while in Maharashtra demand falls during the Hindu month of *Shravan*. This means trouble for poultry farmers as hens don't have much regard for festivals or seasons. NECC has tried to counter these notions through its advertisements. So far it has had mixed though encouraging results. Moreover, both poultry production and consumption have remained confined to certain regions. There are well-developed pockets in Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, Punjab, Haryana, and Tamil Nadu that supply to the mainly urban consumer. Industry watchers feel production can spread to other states as well when they begin to tap the vast rural market.

SURPRISINGLY, the poultry boom has been hatched mainly through private initiative with little or no government support. True, there are a few government institutes engaged in poultry research but they can easily be written off. Poultry farmers point to the wonders that government support—from setting up milk collection centres to cold storage plants throughout the country—has done for dairying. The government apparatus also ensures a support price for the dairy industry thus protecting dairy farmers from market vagaries. It declares a support price for agricultural crops too. But the poultry industry is left totally to market forces.

While acknowledging that more could have been done, government officials deny that poultry has been totally neglected. They list various steps taken by the Government: import of maize which is the main ingredient of poultry feed, reduction in custom duties for necessary amino acids, tax concession on poultry income, and expenditure on research and development. But the industry feels the Government has got its priorities wrong. Says Singh of Venkateshwara Hatcheries: "Instead of investing in research and development where the private sector is already doing well, they should conc
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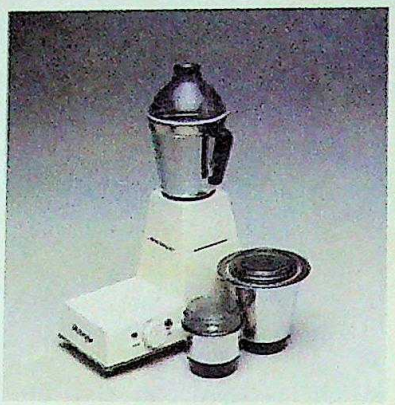
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CHANGE OF IMAGE

THE Rs 119-crore Indian Tourism Development Corporation (ITDC) is making a determined bid to rev up its sagging image. In a recent proposal to the Government the company plans to convert itself into a holding company and go in for partial privatisation. ITDC has already signed a memorandum of understanding with the Hong Kong-based Regent chain of hotels which will pick up a 49 per cent equity stake in a new company to be floated to rebuild the capital's Hotel Janpath—which will be run jointly. It is also negotiating with the Soviet airline Aeroflot for reconstructing Hotel Ranjit, and with both the Hilton chain and Gulf Air for Lodhi Hotel. To boost its profits ITDC is also trying to tap the world market. It has already tied up with Cooper Inc, a leading trading house in Canada, to run two restaurants there and will be setting up a restaurant in Moscow. If that isn't enough, ITDC will soon be setting up a chain store for selling cakes in Delhi. Whether this will help the corporation compete more effectively with private sector hotel chains is another matter. Especially when the tourism industry is going through a bad phase.

ROAD TO RECOVERY

THE state-owned Indian Road Construction Corporation Ltd (IRCC) is trying to achieve a financial turnaround. Just a year ago non-payment of dues from road construction projects in Libya forced the company into the red with losses to the tune of a whopping Rs 150 crore. The Government was even considering closing it down. But now the corporation has come out with a new survival package. It has a proposal to construct express highways in the country with private sector financial participation. And it is scouting around for technical know-how from companies in Holland and other western countries. In order to get quick returns IRCC has suggested that just like in the West, consumers will have to pay a toll tax to use the fast track. Meanwhile, with the Middle Eastern market drying up the corporation is making bids for road construction projects in Malaysia, Thailand and even Africa.

DETERGENT WARS

NEW battlelines are being drawn in the Rs 800-crore detergents market. The weapon: a new concentrate detergent with three times as much washing power than a normal powder. Pitched in battle this time will be not Karsanbhai Patel of Nirma, but the diminutive Rs 75-crore Procter and Gamble (India) Ltd which is all set to take on kingpin Hindustan Lever with the launch of Ariel Microsystem. While Procter and Gamble has just introduced the product in Andhra Pradesh, Lever already has a headstart: it launched its concentrate detergent Rin bar in Maharashtra about a year ago.

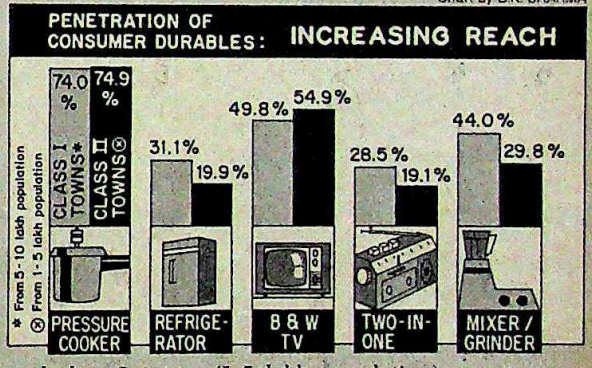
EXPANSION PLANS

THE race is on to grab a slice of the medical electronics pie. After the success of companies like Siemens, BPL and Larsen and Toubro, computer giant Wipro is set to get into the act. The company has tied up with world renowned General Electric in the US and has floated a new company with an investment of Rs 30 crore in which the American company will take 40 per cent equity. Following suit is electronic typewriter giant Network Ltd which has tied up with US-based Picker to manufacture medical equipment. It has set up a medical equipment division which it plans to expand into a separate company later.

SPREADING CONSUMERISM

THE consumer revolution is undoubtedly spreading much beyond the metropolitan cities. A recent survey by Pathfinders—a market research organisation—found that as much as 75 per cent of the consumers in metros, mini metros, class 1 towns (5-10 lakh population)

Chart by B.K. SHARMA



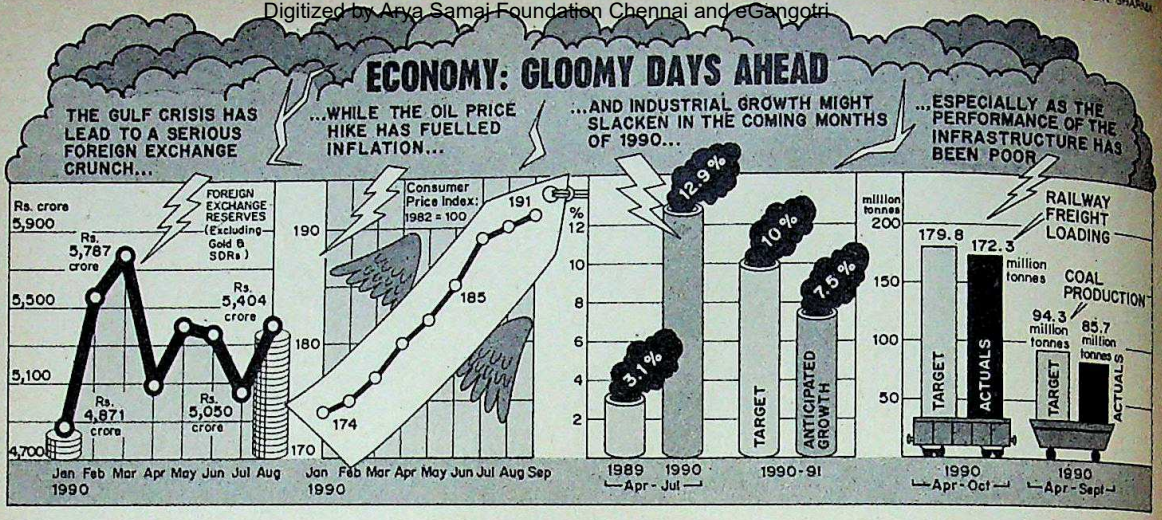
and class 2 towns (1-5 lakh population) use pressure cookers, 55 per cent have black and white television sets and another 38 per cent have mixers or grinders. The survey also confirms earlier findings: while western India has one of the best markets for consumer durables, southern India is catching up especially as far as pressure cookers, mopeds, vacuum cleaners and two-in-ones are concerned. Consumer durable penetration remains the lowest in the eastern markets.

SEEKING A HAVEN

THE NRIs are at it again: anticipating a change at the Centre, Dubai-based NRIs have once again pushed a proposal with the Government to convert the Andaman and Nicobar Islands into a free economic zone. The proposal was first mooted in 1984, but went into cold storage after the Rajiv Gandhi government backtracked from its liberalisation programme. The grand plans include an offshore banking and trading centre at the islands as in the Bahamas and a modern port. It also plans to establish a manufacturing base for export-oriented units. If the proposal comes through, the islands may become a haven for NRIs returning from the Gulf for resettlement—much to the chagrin of environmentalists who are perturbed about the vanishing green cover in India.

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ECONOMY

Heading for Disaster

Political upheavals add to the dismal scenario

ECONOMIC advisors in the Government are wearing a long face these days. With options running out, they have a daunting task ahead: to bring the grim economic environment back on the rails.

Just a few months ago everything seemed hunky-dory. The Government had trimmed the budget deficit, industrial growth was good and the foreign exchange reserves were not alarmingly low. However, as a result of the political confusion and the Gulf crisis, hope has given way to despair. The economic scenario now looks gloomy: prices are riding sky high, the Government is short of foreign exchange, new investment decisions are delayed and industrial production is slowing down fter a period of soaring growth.

Given the state of the economy, the Finance Ministry had to cut down imports, trim plan allocations, reduce credit flow to the corporate sector and delay mega projects. Admits a senior Finance Ministry official: "The overall situation is uncomfortable."

FOREIGN EXCHANGE CRUNCH AND INFLATION: TROUBLED TIMES

With the hike in oil prices, the Government will have to fork out an extra Rs 5,000 crore in foreign exchange thus worsening the balance of payments crisis and fuelling inflation which will further affect the common man on the street. The foreign exchange reserves have already hit a rock bottom at Rs 5,050 crore—just enough for 10 weeks imports. Worse, the burden of external debt which stood at Rs 100,000 crore at the end of March this year might worsen as the Government has few options but to borrow more money.

But it is the price rise which has again become a serious issue. Doomsayers predict inflation could well reach a high of 15 per cent. Even though the situation is not as bad as the oil shock in 1974-75 when the index soared by 25 per cent, as a senior Government economist says, "it comes together with political instability, signs of industrial production going down and a Government which just might not have the will to tackle the problem." Government economists admit that inflation cannot be pegged at 6.5 per cent as estimated.

> The state of the economy is grim; there is a shortage of foreign exchange, prices are rising and industrial production is slowing down.

GOVERNMENT OFFENSIVE: MAJOR AUSTERITY DRIVE

The Government is taking desperate measures to put the axe on expenditure and imports. It hopes that by putting the brakes on imports it will be able to save Rs 1,000 crore. In this light, all mega projects are being reviewed, the eight companies that want to set up petrochemical plants have been told that the Government will not release any free foreign exchange, and financial institutions will not give any rupee loan for these projects. As a result only two or three of them will ever see the light of day. The Planning Commission is not sparing even major thermal and hydro electric power projects from cuts in outlay.

BUDGET DEFICIT: HIGHER THAN WHAT WAS PROJECTED

Inflation raises the prospect of a huge budget deficit. It could be much higher than the budget estimates of Rs 7,206 crore—maybe even to the tune of Rs 10,000 crore. There is every indication that the defence expenditure might go up. Besides, food grain subsidies have to be upped as the Government has increased the procurement prices to woo the farmers.

More importantly, tax collections have been consistently slackening. Excise collections were below target by 1 per cent in the first four months of the year. Also, net collections of direct taxes between April and September fell dramatically by 17 per cent from those of last year.

However, even if the signs look ominous, there is still reason to be cheerful. For one, good monsoons have brightened the prospects of overtaking the 177 million tonnes target

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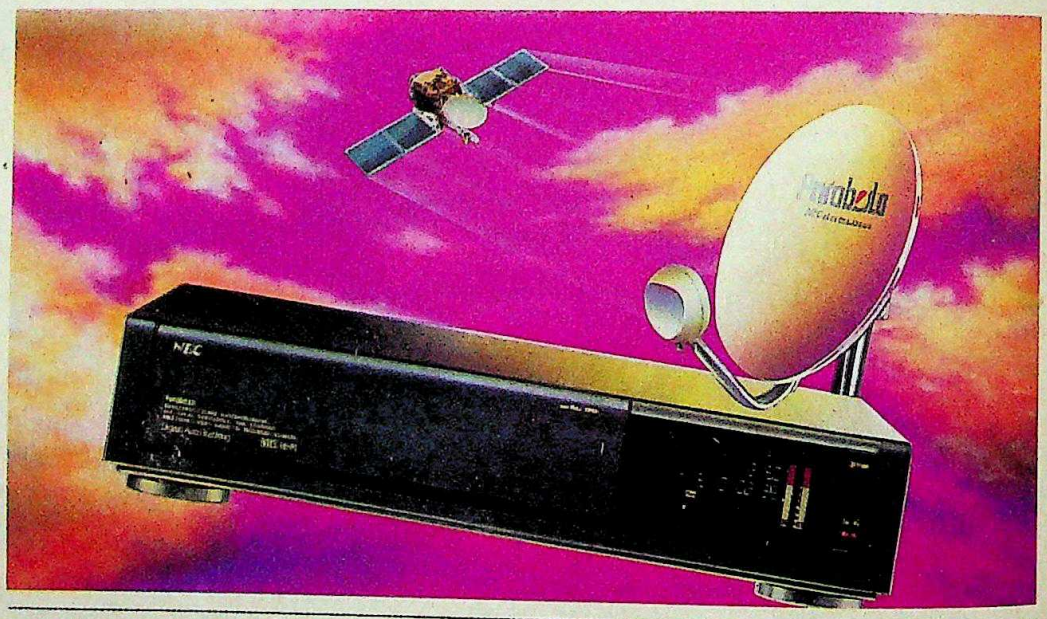
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for foodgrain production—thus spurring a demand for consumer goods among farmers. Also, industrial growth has gone up by 12.5 per cent in the first four months of this year and corporate profits show absolutely no signs of waning. Says V.P. Chitale, director, Associated Chambers of Commerce: "Industry is increasingly getting insulated from the vagaries of political instability."

SLOWDOWN IN INDUSTRY: ADVERSE IMPACT NEXT YEAR

But the good times for industry might not last long. Says D.H. Pai Panandikar, secretary-general of the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry: "The adverse effect of the balance of payments problem will be seen later in 1991-92. New investments will be affected severely." Even Industry Ministry officials admit that there is no chance of achieving the targeted 10-per cent industrial growth this year.

The signs of a slowdown are already apparent. Says Y.K. Modi, vice-chairman of Modi Alkalies and Chemical Ltd: "The political climate and the frequent bandhs have led to transport problems which have affected the movement of our products." The company expects a 10-per cent drop in chemicals production. Even cement production has been 30 per cent below the target for October due to coal shortages and transportation problems. Moreover, the production of mopeds, cars and jeeps has been less than last year.

The slowing down of government orders, the loss of Middle Eastern markets and the cut-back in foreign exchange will affect engineering exports adversely. Says a Confederation of Engineering Industry spokesman: "We had expected a growth of 15 per cent this year. Now it will be good if we reach 10 per cent."

The industries that will feel the pinch immediately are those that use oil or are heavily dependent on imports for their survival. For instance, J.K Synthetics—which manufactures synthetic fibres—will have to fork out an additional Rs 80 lakh due to the increase in the cost of its oil-based raw materials. Pratap Narayan, executive director of the Fertiliser Association of India warns that any decision to stall imports of phosphoric acid—a raw material used for the manufacture of phosphatic fertiliser—would force at least half a dozen fertiliser plants to close down production.

POLITICAL UNCERTAINTY: MAJOR INVESTMENT DECISIONS ON HOLD

The political uncertainty hovering over the nation is also forcing companies to delay investment decisions. For instance, between April and September this year the total amount collected through capital issues declined to a mere Rs 1,477 crore from Rs 4,794 crore in the corresponding period last year. Laments Sanjiv Goenka, vice-chairman of RPG Enterprises: "The Government seems to have imposed a moratorium on all new investments. This will affect industrial growth."

There are complaints that the Government is sitting on projects without taking any decisions. The Raunaq Group—which controls a clutch of companies—points out that though they set up a joint venture company for exploration of oil a year ago, it is still waiting for orders from the Government.

Worse, the country's international image took a downturn as the Government continued to dilly-dally with the positive and negative lists earmarking areas where foreign investments would be allowed or discouraged. If this wasn't enough Industry Minister Ajit Singh cancelled his trip to Davos, Switzerland—missing a meeting for leading businessmen of the world.

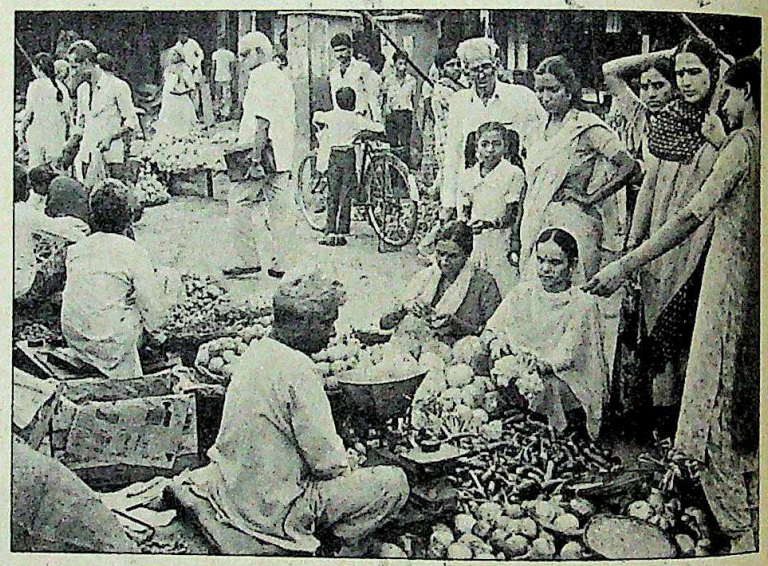
As if in retaliation four business delegations from Europe, including an official visit by the vice-president of the European Economic Community, cancelled their trips. Result: foreign investments approvals dropped by half in the first eight months compared to the corresponding period last year.

Many are already questioning whether the Government's efforts to slash down expenditure will deliver the goods. Though petroleum consumption in the first six months of 1990-91 was up by 5 per cent, the Government still hopes to peg consumption at last year's level. Also, there has hardly been any effort to conserve energy.

Any hopes of improving the situation through an increase in exports by as much as another Rs 2,000 crore may not bear fruit. Exports between April and August this year grew by 22.5 per cent, much below the anticipated growth of 35 per cent.

Given the state of the economy, the Government has few options apart from going on an austerity drive. The new Government might even have to go to the IMF to tide over the crisis. Says D.T. Lakdawalla, honorary director of the Bombay-based Centre for Monitoring the Indian Economy: "That is not all. We need to consider a sharp reduction in subsidies and need a basic change in our attitude towards export." Harsh measures—but then these are hard times.

—SURAJEET DAS GUPTA with SHIV TANEJA

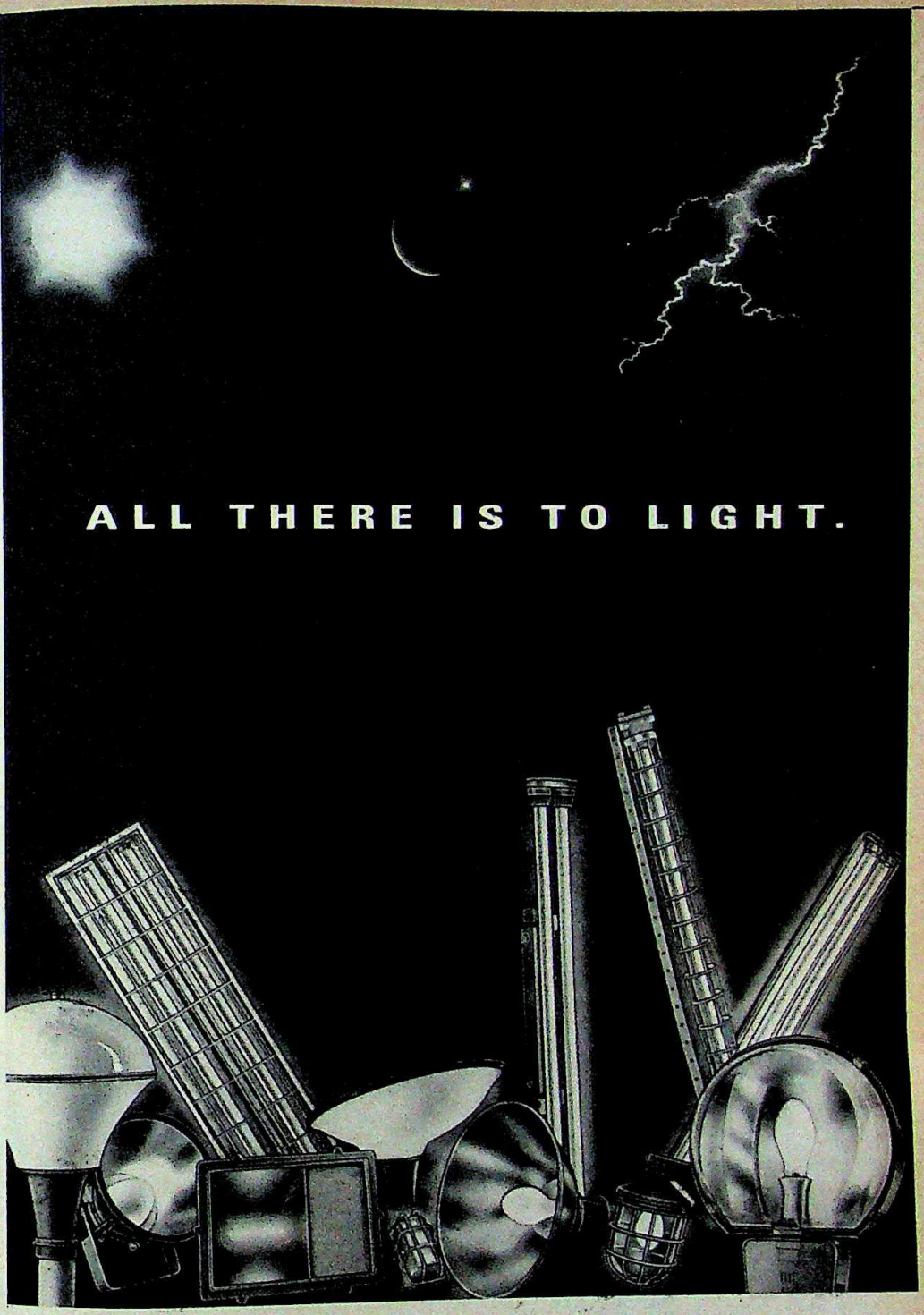


With prices likely to sky-rocket further the common man is going to face hard times ahead.

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MUTUAL FUNDS

Raking it in

Competition ensures better returns

IN 1986, Ramesh Petekar—the owner of a small ancillary electronics unit on the outskirts of Pune—made his first investment of Rs 5,000 in the Bombay Stock Exchange, not directly through a broker, but through something called a mutual fund which a nationalised bank had launched that year. He learned that investing in mutual funds was safer than operating in the stock-market directly. And, in many cases, it offered higher returns than other traditional savings instruments: bank deposits or company debentures and fixed deposits.

Like Petekar, millions of Indians have been stung by the mutual fund bug and have pumped their savings in it. The mutual fund company gathers money from the investors, and puts it at the disposal of its fund managers who make investments in the stock-markets and other financial instruments. The advantages to individual investors are clear: a good return without the hassles of monitoring the intricacies of complicated financial markets.

In 1989-90 a whopping Rs 6,000 crore was raised by these mutual funds. Admittedly, the Unit Trust of India (UTI)—which for years has been the only mutual fund—still accounts for a lion's share of this. But the expanding of the mutual fund business has had an amazing impact on the stock-market. In 1990, with more mutual fund companies jumping into the fray, and Canbank Mutual Fund raising Rs 1,000 crore through Canstar, one of its schemes, the amount raised has already crossed Rs 3,000 crore and is growing rapidly.

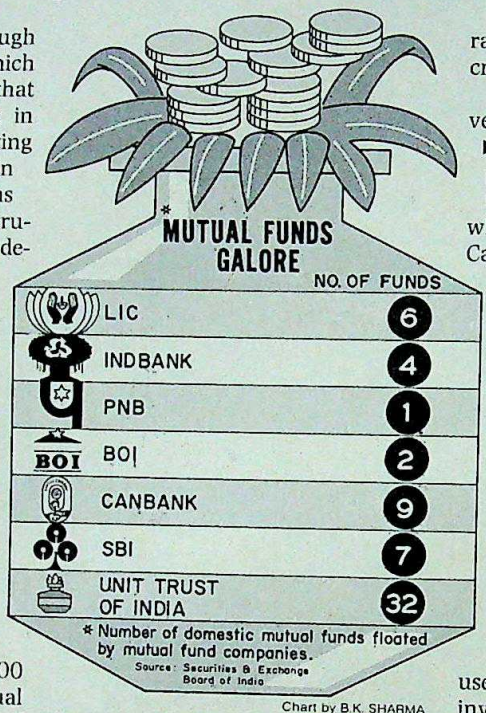


Chart by B.K. SHARMA

With this opening up there are two very clear benefits:

► Millions of more Indians are now part of the "equity cult", many of them from small towns and villages which till now were untouched. Canbank Mutual Fund, for instance, which launched its first scheme in December 1988, had 18,000 investors. Today it has over 10 lakh investors, and has raised about Rs 2,000 crore. Says B.R. Acharya, general manager, Canbank Mutual Fund: "Of the Rs 1,000 crore we collected by way of Canstar, 20 per cent came from the rural and semi-urban areas." Clearly, the reach of the markets is much wider now through the mutual fund schemes.

► Competition among mutual funds has ensured more efficient use of the funds and better returns to investors. Admitted UTI Chairman S.A. Dave: "Today no one will look at a return of less than 13 per cent." But along with these benefits have come

OFFSHORE MUTUAL FUNDS

Fresh Forays

FOR countries like India, who are trying to penetrate the markets of Europe and the US, there is no better way to get into the big bad world of global finance than offshore mutual funds. And India is no stranger to this concept. Back in 1986, companies like SBI Capital Markets and the Unit Trust of India, in conjunction with international merchant bankers like Merrill Lynch, raised money in capital markets abroad and invested it in the burgeoning stock-markets of India.

These initial forays were quickly followed by ANZ Grindlays, Citibank India and the Modis coming together with international bankers to float their own funds in overseas markets. If all goes well, by the end of the year the Government will give clearance to raise as much as $1,000 million through offshore mutual funds, which will make the country's exchequer funds richer by Rs 1,800 crore in foreign exchange. SBI Capital Markets is about to get clearance to raise about $400 million (Rs 720 crore) by floating mutual funds overseas.

That is not all. Other companies like Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC) are reported to have also got government clearance to raise funds abroad, raising between $75 million (Rs 135 crore) and $150 million (Rs 270 crore) a piece. Says P.K. Pandit, executive director at LIC Mutual Fund, which is planning a $150 million offshore fund with Jardine Fleming of Hong Kong: "The Indian markets are among the best to invest in this region." M.S. Verma, joint executive director at SBI Capital Markets concurs with him.

But with India's international credit rating down this might not be the most opportune moment to launch these funds. Says a financial analyst: "India is at its weakest today in the international markets. This may not be the best time to approach the world's markets." But that has not put a damper on the burgeoning mutual funds.

—SHIV TANEJA

Photographs by NAMAS BHOJANI





Pandit (left); and Verma: good times ahead

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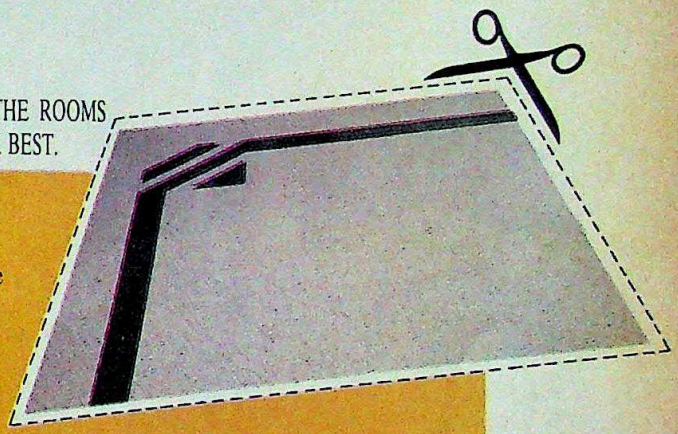
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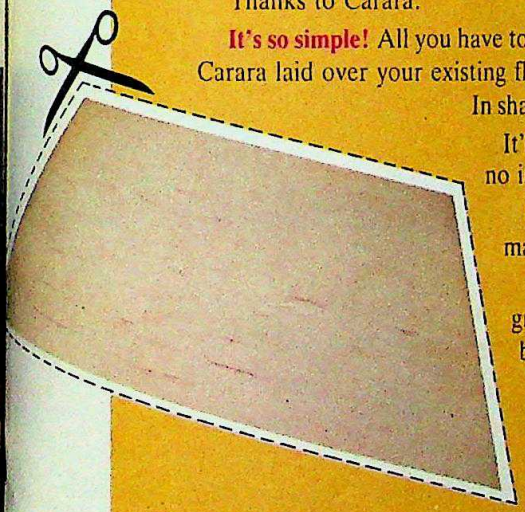
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In shades that match your walls and furnishings.

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Blended Marble. Carara is made of blended marble, a unique floor covering material.

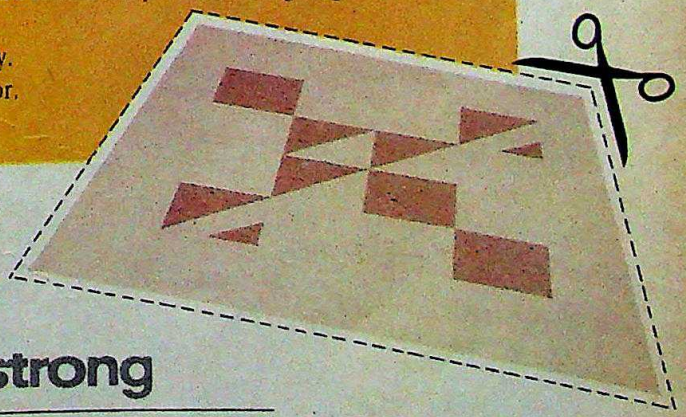
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Colours to match your decor. You get two exquisite designs and a range of original shades to choose from. And the smooth toughness of marble: Carara is scratch-resistant.

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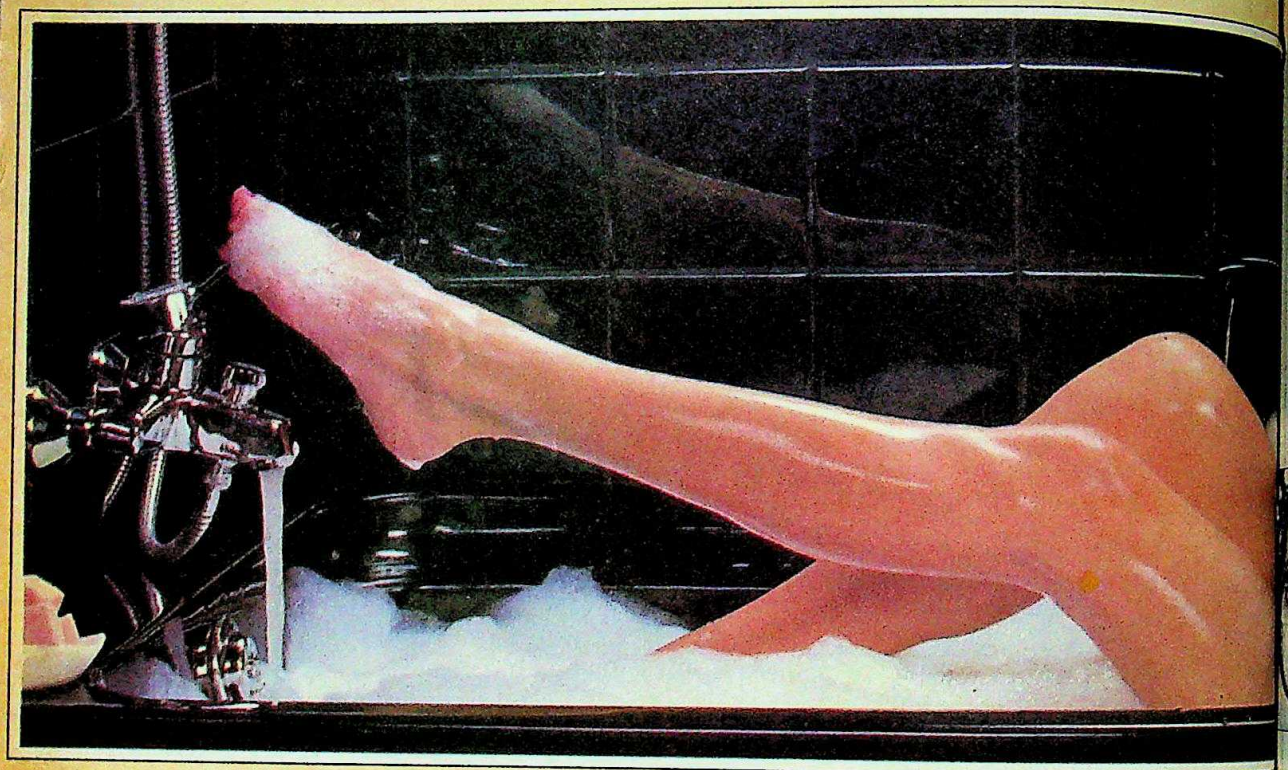
CARARA

BLENDED MARBLE TILES

Instant floor decor

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the attendant problems. Despite the fact that not all the money raised by these funds is deployed in the stock-market (between 20 and 40 per cent finds its way to the stock-market and the balance into fixed income-bearing securities like public sector bonds), their sheer size and the fact that there is insufficient floating stock of the prized scrips, tends to inflate prices beyond realistic levels.

In the frenzy of competition, the mutual funds now seem to gain their competitive edge by solely "assuring" higher dividends—and not fully explaining the attendant risks. To add to this, the relationship with the parent organisation—the nationalised bank—is left ambiguous at best, thus leading many unsuspecting investors to believe that the fund's operations are guaranteed by the nationalised bank, which is untrue. Says G.V. Ramakrishna, chairman of the Securities and Exchange Board of India, who has been leading the campaign for greater regulation and discipline amongst mutual funds: "In this early stage of evolution of this instrument, and the fact that most investors are first time investors, greater transparency and disclosure are a must."

Despite this concern, there is little doubt that mutual funds in India have done more for the financial system and the average investor than any thing else in the last 20 years.

—SHIV TANEJA

Dave (left) of UTI and Acharya of Canbank Fund: leading the boom





Millions of Indians, stung by the mutual fund bug, are pumping their savings in them.

BUSINESSPEAK

MUKUND GOVIND DIWAN

"Disallow Competition"



WHEN 59-year-old Mukund Govind Diwan took over as chairman of the Rs-23,220-crore Life Insurance Corporation (LIC) recently, he took on a company very different from the one that he had joined 36 years earlier. A fellow of the Institute of Actuaries, London, Diwan makes no excuses for the LIC's monopolistic status, arguing instead for keeping international competition away from the business of insurance in India. In fact, he thinks LIC is strong enough to withstand both Indian and foreign competition. And any opening up will have to be a controlled one. Last week Diwan spoke to Senior Correspondent SHIV TANEJA in Bombay.

WITH over 20 per cent of the working population under the cover of the LIC, we have come a long way from the image of the 1970s—one of a poor and inefficient service—when there was considerable resistance to our sales attempts. Our thrust in recent years—on rural India—has also begun to pay dividends. And this year our growth in the rural areas has been 5 per cent higher than that in the urban areas. The new business of individual assurances has also registered a growth: from Rs 5,400 crore in 1984-85 to over Rs 23,220 crore in 1989-90. Our target next year is to cross Rs 30,000 crore and 1 crore policies.

With nationalisation in 1956, the overseas offices of various insurance companies were also taken over. Like in India, other Asian and African countries also nationalised their insurance business, So currently we only have three offices for new business: London, Suva in Fiji and Port Louis in Mauritius. We have two joint venture companies in Kenya and Malaysia, and branch offices in Rangoon and Colombo to service residual accounts. However, in July 1989 we set up an offshore insurance company—LIC (International) EC—in Bahrain to provide insurance services to NRIs.

Till recently, the US hadn't evinced much interest in insurance in India. Even before insurance in India was nationalised, it was primarily Commonwealth countries like the UK and Canada that did business in India. America's sudden interest in India probably stems from our success and their recognition of India as a market with vast potential. Despite conventional wisdom which says that competition is ultimately good for the consumer, in this case we think it is not.

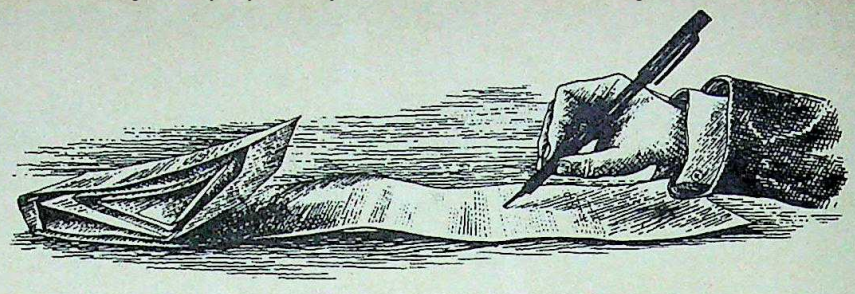
If foreign insurance companies are allowed into India they will take away the cream of business from us—the same business which to some extent subsidises growth and development of insurance into the interior and rural parts of India. Today the LIC is strong enough to withstand competition, whether Indian or foreign. And, as I see it, any opening up will have to be a controlled operation with foreign companies having to perform similar obligations as we do.

In our attempt to eventually become a financial supermarket, offering a variety of financial services to our customers, the LIC has ventured into new areas: retail housing finance, mutual funds and pension funds. Out of a total of Rs 3,500 crore that has been disbursed towards housing finance, retail housing has accounted for about Rs 550 crore. In an attempt to give better returns to our policyholders, we have entered the mutual funds business with the setting up of a subsidiary—LIC Mutual Fund—in June 1989. Our pension plans, Jeevan Dhara and Jeevan Akshay, floated in November 1987, are performing a useful role and last year we sold over 1,80,000 policies. There is a synergy in all of this.

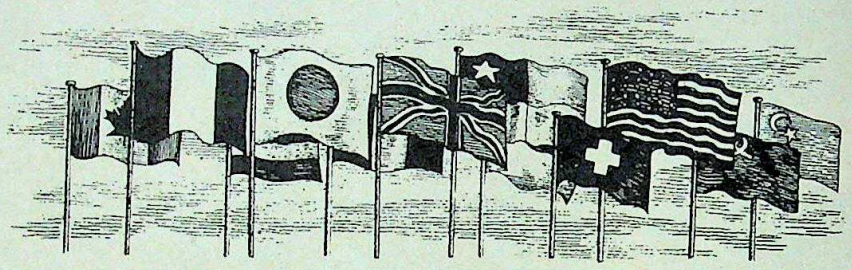
We would like to make a more direct contribution to health and education. In this case, not only will the nation as a whole benefit, but being in the business of insurance we stand to gain as well from a healthier and better educated nation.

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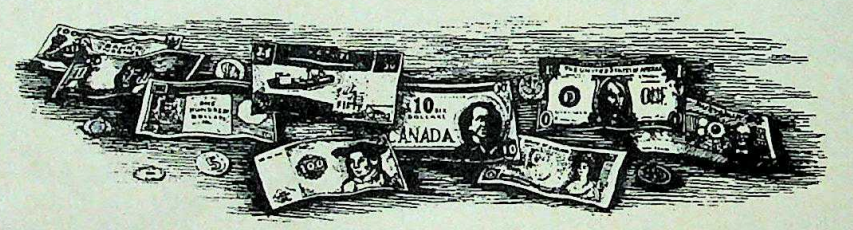
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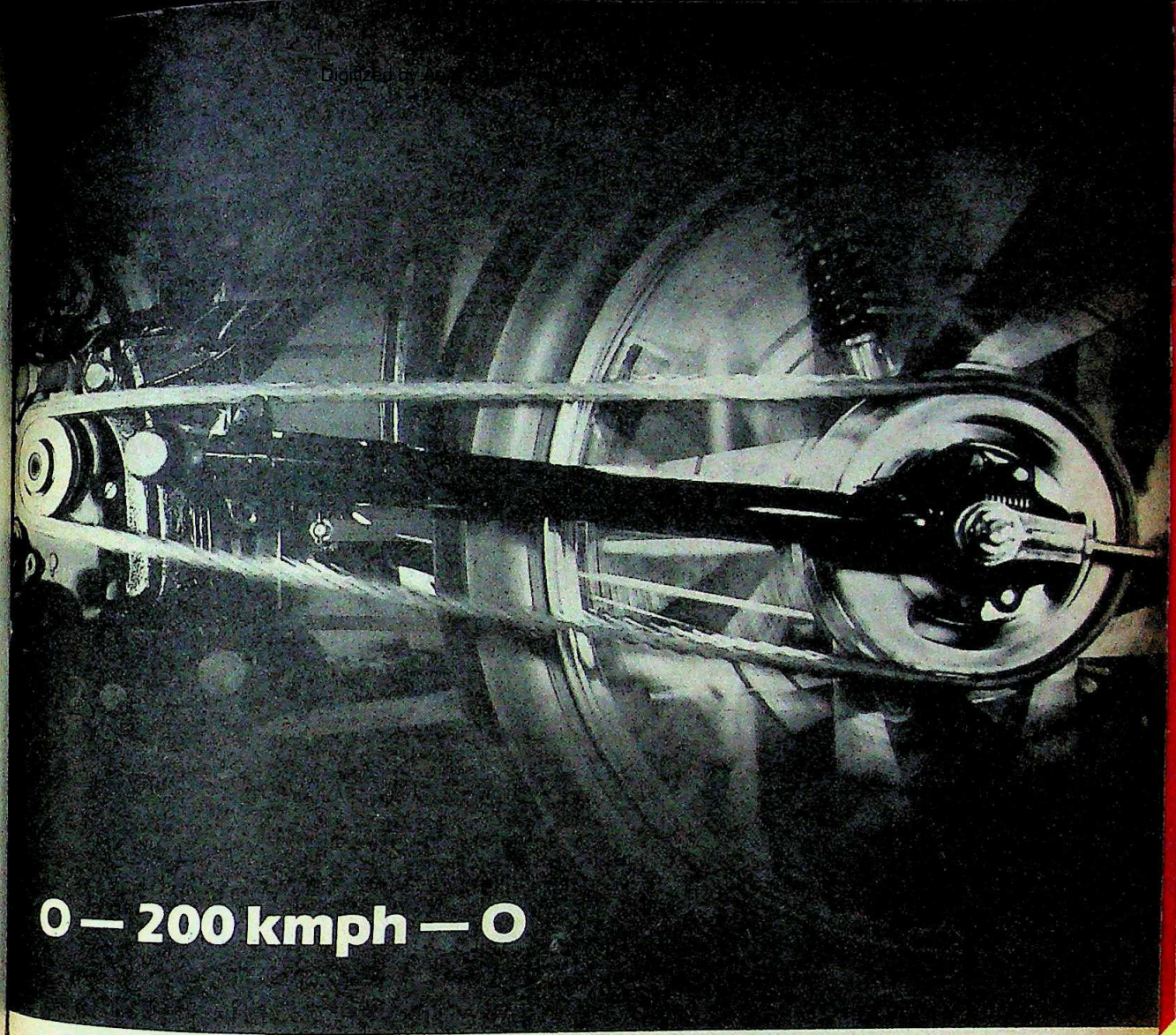
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0 — 200 kmph — 0

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The reason for this is simple. It's a chain that makes a bike move. And drives those wheels to spin that way.

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Diamond Super Chain.

But why does every bike manufacturer choose Diamond Super?

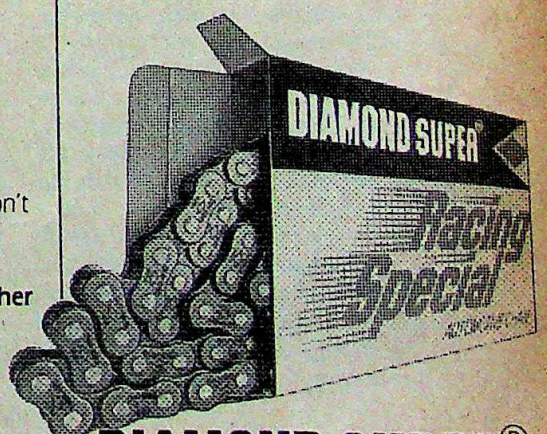
It's made by TI Diamond Chain Ltd., in technical collaboration with Diamond Chain Co., USA.

It has very low elongation. Undergoes surface hardening for **longer life.** Has thicker plates for **greater strength.** And is pre-lubricated for **silent, smooth performance.**

With all this, chances are, you won't have to replace your original Diamond Super. For a long time.

But when you do, **insist on another Diamond Super Chain only.**

And feel the power come back to you.



DIAMOND SUPER®

A TI product

Some things in a bike should stay original.

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TANCEM

Cracking Up

Cement unit in a shambles

A glossy brochure put out by the Tamil Nadu Cements Corporation Limited (Tancem), a unit of the Tamil Nadu Industrial Development Corporation, has a catchy slogan on its cover: "Making nation building our business". But as things stand, the Rs 79-crore company can barely keep itself from crumbling, tottering as it is under the burden of a Rs 7.26-crore loss last year. So much so that the industries department is thinking of laying off around 3,000 employees in the company's cement plants at Ariyalur and Alangulam.

Apart from the cement plants Tancem also has a plant manufacturing asbestos sheets at Alangulam (profit Rs 1.02 crore), another making asbestos pressure pipes at Mayanur (loss Rs 2.59 crore), and a stoneware pipe factory at Vridachallam (profit Rs .08 crore). It is the cement plants that are cracking up the company's finances, producing only 6.5 lakh metric tonnes of the installed capacity of 9 lakh metric tonnes. Incidentally, in 1987-88 Tancem had a profit of Rs 3.46 crore on a Rs 79.3 crore turnover.

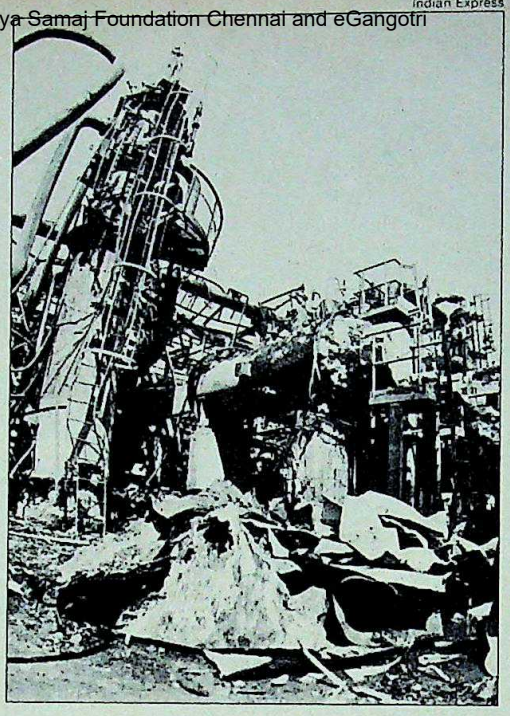
The Government had ordered all state agencies to purchase asbestos products from Tancem in an effort to stymie its decline but sales continued to fall. The state committee on public undertakings has noted that even if all the state agencies purchased their requirements of asbestos pressure pipes from Tancem, the off take would be only 20 to 30 per cent of the achievable capacity.

According to sources the K.V. Ramanathan Commission which looked into state sector companies had passed adverse comments on the administration and recommended gradual disinvestment of Tancem shares by converting it into a joint-sector firm by an association of suitable entrepreneurs. There is also a suggestion to appoint yet another technical committee to see what's wrong with the cement plants.

The new Industry Secretary R. Poornalingam and the new Managing Director Arun Ramanathan will have to do something more than talk of appointing committees if the cracks in Tancem are to be well cemented.

—KAVITHA SHETTY

Indian Express



Gas Cracker Complex after explosion

IPCL

A Severe Setback

Mishap delays self-sufficiency drive

THE blast was estimated to have the power of 200 tonnes of TNT. As the gas piped to the Rs 1,390-crore cracker complex of the Indian Petrochemical Corporation Ltd (IPCL) at Nagothane in Maharashtra escaped and exploded last fortnight, more than 20 people died instantly and almost as many were injured. And at a time when India can ill afford a higher import bill, the ambitious plan for attaining self-sufficiency in petrochemicals has received a severe set-back.

The impact of the blast on the economy will be felt for a long time to come, not only adding to the import bill but also hiking up the price of a variety of polymer-based products. If the Nagothane complex could have been commissioned as planned, it would have produced 40,000 tonnes of polymers—an essential raw material for nearly 7,000 plastic units in the country—by March alone. Now all of this will continue to be imported, adding $40 million to the import bill just in the next five months. "More than half the country's consumption of polymers is imported under OGL today. The mishap will further delay the drive towards self-sufficiency," observed M.S. Patwardhan of the National Organic Chemical Industries Ltd.

The IPCL's Maharashtra Gas Cracker Complex, about 100 km south of Bombay, is the first of eight petrochemical complexes with a total investment of Rs 20,000 crore, and is designed by the US giant Stone and Webster to annually produce 2.75 lakh tonnes of polymers.

The public sector Nagothane gas cracker complex was already delayed by more than a year, because the supply of gas by the Oil and Natural Gas Commission through a 57-km pipeline from Uran could not begin on schedule. But trial runs had begun, and it was due to be commissioned by the end of this year when a leak in the gas receiving, chilling and storing plant resulted in the explosion.

While initially IPCL officials estimated the loss from the explosion to be Rs 30 crore, there was hope that the compressors in the cooling plant had escaped damage, thanks mainly to three brave Central Industrial Security Force firefighters who prevented the blaze from spreading. If the compressors are undamaged, the loss will be reduced to a third and IPCL would be able to replace the other damaged equipment and commission the plant by March next year.

Petrochemicals Secretary M.S. Gill announced after visiting Nagothane, along with IPCL Chairman and Managing Director Hasmukh Shah, that while a high-power committee would be appointed immediately to probe the blast, a task force had already been constituted to order equipment which needed replacement from abroad.

For long the IPCL, with a turnover of nearly 1,200 crore and profits close to Rs 100 crore, has been regarded as an exceptional public sector success story. It was held up as a model of safety in the hazardous chemical industry, having an accident rate far below the average for the Indian chemical industry. Though the disaster at Nagothane was contained, the reverberations from the blast will long haunt the petrochemical corporation.

—M. RAHMAN

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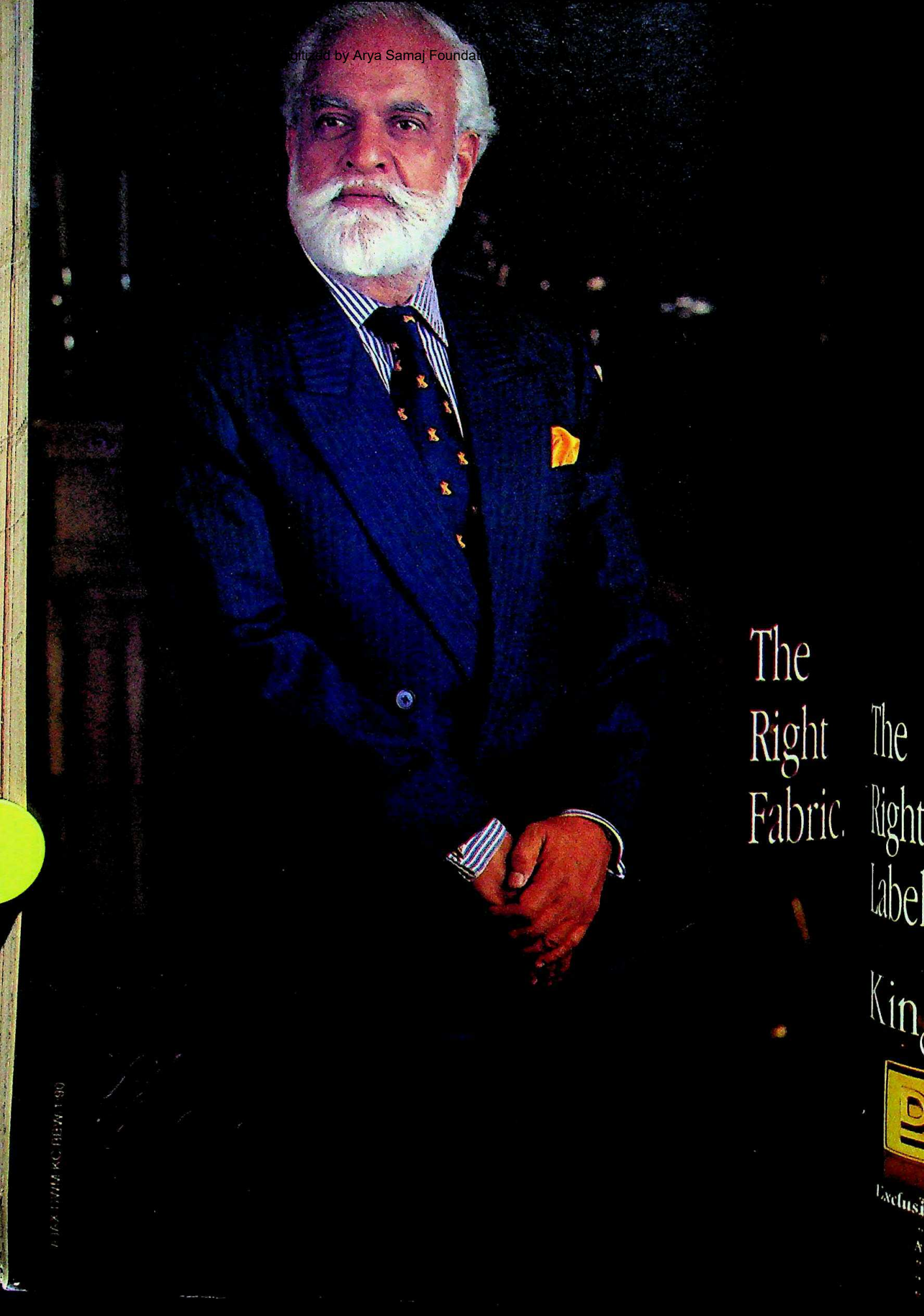
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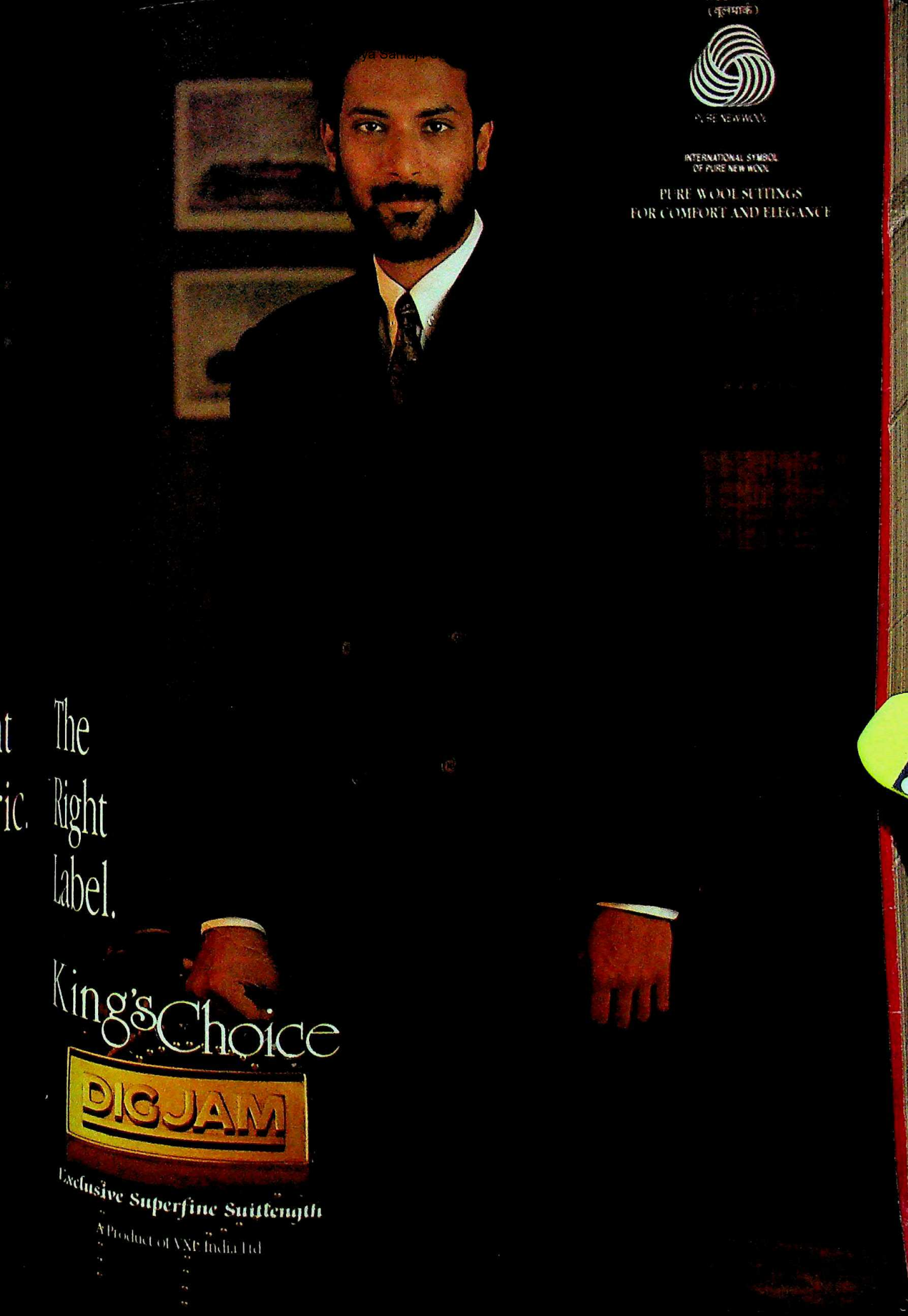


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WORKING WOMEN

Dual Role

It's still family before job

FOR marketeers targeting their products at the 'discerning' Indian woman, the dependable stereotype has been that of a self-indulgent, financially independent, hard-headed careerist—someone who can easily afford to splurge on gizmos and goods, prefers to live in self-contained nuclear families and takes all her own financial decisions.

The almost mythical stereotype, a recent survey reveals, is all wish-fulfilling, advertising crock. Reality makes nonsense of this long-standing myth. A major survey conducted in the four metros of Delhi, Bombay, Calcutta and Madras shows that, in sharp contrast to their more adaptable western counterparts, Indian working women are going through a complex act of trying to balance their traditional roles at home with the demands of their more 'modernised' workplaces.

This unusual—and for marketeers rather discomfiting—picture emerges from a syndicated study of attitudes based on group discussions conducted by Pathfinders, a market research organisation. The discussions comprised of both married and unmarried women ranging from the ages of 20 to 45 and from clerks to executives. The levelling factor was that all of them took home pay-packets of Rs 1,500 or above per month.

Says S. Sthanunathan, the Delhi branch manager of Pathfinders: "The response was enthusiastic. They opened out a lot during the discussions." What came through was a revelation of sorts: most working women attached precedence to family over their jobs, and preferred to live in joint families where their children would be looked after. And they still consider investment decisions an exclusively male preserve, despite their own pay-packets.

Although the number of working women is increasing every day—in metros and mini-metros, nearly 12.4 per cent of households with incomes of Rs 1,500 per month and over have housewives who are employed—demographic data is conspicuous by its sketchiness. Says Preet Bedi, general manager of Lintas, an advertising group: "Previously, no one was ready to use working women as an advertising strategy. But today they are increasingly becoming a role model for the entire population of women. We have to know more about them." This attitude reflects the growing perception of many marketeers that this segment could well be a major target audience for many products.

The detailed qualitative analysis reveals three identifiable types of the Indian working women:

- The "casual workers", often unmarried and generally in the clerk or receptionist grade, who are biding their time till marriage and motherhood take their toll;
- The "just-a-job" women—incidentally the largest category—who are likely to work all their lives, are not ambitious and who work to escape domestic drudgery; and
- The "career women", who derive their fulfilment from work and from little else.

Yet there is a common trait which is shared by working women: they are more educated than their home-bound sisters and are more aware of their social responsibilities. At least half of those interviewed had married late, between the ages of 21 and 24; as many as 34 per cent had their first child between 24 and 28; 98 per cent can read English; and slightly less than 50 per cent are graduates.

Few of them, however, are willing to gird up and leave traditional roles to surrogates, notwithstanding how efficient they may be. So ready-to-cook foods, which are perceived as compromising their traditional role, are out and jobs with flexible timings are in.

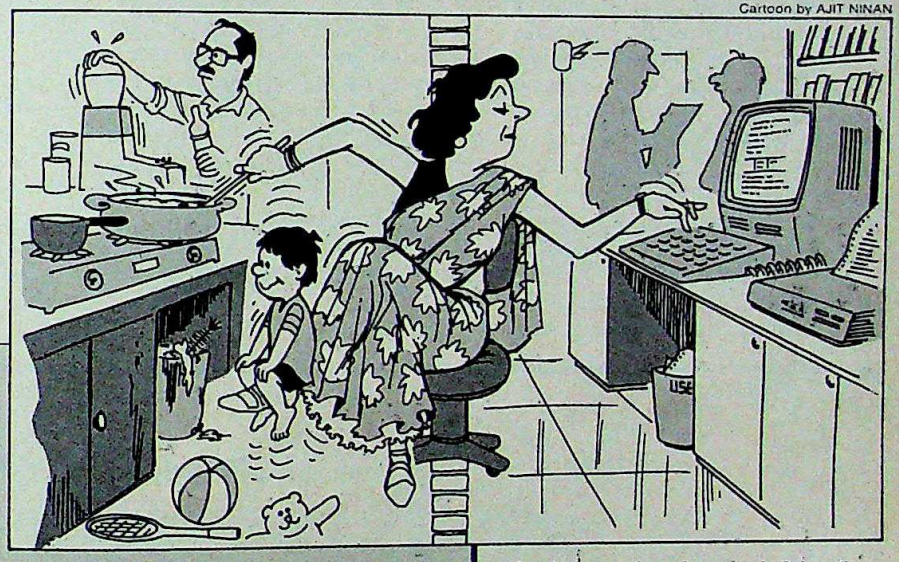
Time is undoubtedly at a premium. So shopping is done in marts halfway between home and office, and weekends are reserved for housework. And the helping hand extended by their husbands is readily accepted. Although the male in the family is still the official big-budget spendthrift, the working woman is beginning to participate. And new-found financial independence gives them a lot of leeway. A separate income encourages them to indulge their family and friends.

Fashion came out with a negative, being regarded as frivolous. The stress was on elegance and dignity, with comfortable attire, like cotton saris, taking precedence. Cosmetics are used only by the younger generation, and that too in moderation. What is important is the latitude and confidence to mix freely with men, come home late and expound "new ideas".

The study confirms that the working women of today have a wider perspective and a greater sense of self esteem. So advertisers had better take notice. As the marketing legend goes: "You've come a long way, baby."

—SURAJEET DAS GUPTA

Cartoon by AJIT NINAN



Amazingly the survey shows working women would prefer to live in joint families so the children are taken care of.

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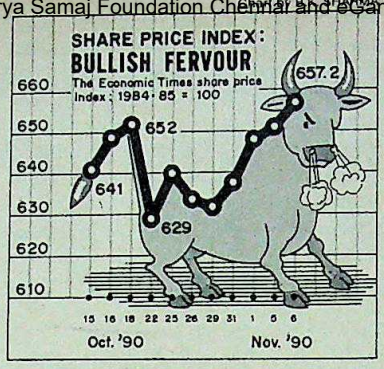
THE MARKETS

Brisk Again

Reliance stock zooms up

YET another fortnight where uncertainty was at a premium, but this time with a slight difference—most of the uncertainty is political. The stock-markets, which were decidedly diffident last fortnight due to the fluid political platform, have turned firm once again. With brisk trading having resumed towards the end of the fortnight, the Bombay Stock Exchange (BSE) 30-share Sensitive Index is once again moving into the 1,400 points band, although most of the action is restricted to a few pivotals.

The ostensible reason for the recent upward surge in the BSE's 30-share Sensitive Index of 31 points to pip the 1,400 mark (1,412.7), is the ouster of the V.P. Singh's Government. Reliance, which the market believes has suffered at the hands of this government, flared up to Rs 234 on sustained buying and was quoting even higher on kerb deals. Larsen and Toubro, the other company whose fortunes now



Cartoon by B.K. SHARMA

appear to be linked with those of the Ambanis, also moved up to touch Rs 148.75 before closing at Rs 141.25.

Tata Steel which has just announced good six-monthly results—gross profit of Rs 178.34 crore, compared to Rs 137.50 crore of the same period last year—clocked up an increase of just under 30 per cent. The scrip has moved up to close at over Rs 210, and there are indications it will go up further, as these results do not reflect the two steel price hikes that the Government introduced in September. Telco was firmer at Rs 240, and ACC has crossed the Rs 2,500 mark to close at Rs 2,550.

Some observers feel that the decision of the Government to allow the import of an additional 2.8 million tonnes of oil—at a cost of Rs 1,160 crore—has also buoyed the market slightly. Says an analyst: "What they do not seem to realise is that we have to pay for this—it isn't coming for free."

Notwithstanding this, the positions taken by the market have made one thing clear: irrespective of who comes to power, the market anticipates, and probably expects, that the process of liberalisation will continue. The optimists feel that India's fractious political situation will arrive at some solutions, in which case the next financial year will be a good one. Not so, say others. Adds one financial analyst: "In this country, the lag time for inflation is about six months. Our problems, induced by double digit inflation, will begin in the second half of next year."

Markets around the country have also reacted positively, with 10 to 15 per cent increases in most of the other major centres. Madras was mixed, but the volumes were good, and the undertones strong. Calcutta has reacted sharply in an upward movement, and ACC was quoted at Rs 2,500 and even higher at Rs 2,600 in deals after official trading hours.

ACTIVE STOCKS

	1990 HIGH	1990 LOW	CLOSE 6.11.90	Change in Fortnight
Ashok Leyland	126.50	69.50	120.00	10.00 +
Associated Cement	2550.00	325.00	2550.00	450.00 +
Asian Paints	305.00	207.50	252.50	nil
Atlas Copco	68.00	32.50	52.00	2.00 +
Bajaj Auto	770.00	355.00	660.00	40.00 +
Baroda Rayon	1925.00	617.50	860.00	350.00* –
Bata India	104.00	62.50	104.00	7.00 +
Ballarpur	325.00	120.00	273.00	35.00 +
Birla Jute	228.00	50.50	228.00	48.00 +
Blow Plast	140.00	34.50	90.00	10.00 –
Bombay Dyeing	445.00	173.00	192.50	7.50 +
Britannia Ind.	167.00	97.00	152.00	12.00 +
Brooke Bond	175.00	91.00	137.00	9.00 –
Cadbury India	192.50	133.75	167.50	2.50 +
Century Textiles	4750.00	2420.00	4575.00	450.00 +
Colgate Palmolive	360.00	176.25	305.00	15.00 +
Cyanamid	150.00	87.50	110.00	nil
DCM	160.00	45.50	150.00	37.50 +
Dunlop	93.00	51.75	68.00	4.00 –
E.I. Hotels	65.25	50.00	60.00	2.50 +
Escorts	200.00	77.75	165.00	5.00 +
Finolex Cables	410.00	200.00	275.00	10.00 –
Garware Nylon	71.00	48.00	56.25	nil
G.E. Shipping	54.75	34.50	37.50	0.50 +
G.S.F.C.	275.00	155.00	210.00	16.25 +
Grasim Ind.	277.50	106.00	212.50	15.00 +
Hind. Aluminium	417.50	205.00	330.00	15.00 +
Hind. Ciba	1900.00	960.00	1325.00	100.00 +
Hindustan Lever	172.50	101.00	142.50	7.50 +
Hindustan Motors	68.50	19.80	38.00	1.50 +
Hoechst	3400.00	1295.00	2800.00	350.00 +
ICI India Ltd.	72.00	35.25	52.00	2.00 –
Indian Organic	91.25	46.50	66.25	6.25 +
Indian Rayon	175.00	84.00	125.00	7.50 +
Indrol	320.00	161.25	280.00	nil
Ingersoll-Rand	305.00	190.00	280.00	30.00 +
ITC	182.00	48.75	142.00	5.00 +
J.K. Synthetics	90.00	49.00	55.00	nil
Kinetic Engineering	255.00	130.00	200.00	10.00 +
Kirloskar Cummins	125.00	65.00	107.50	7.50 +
KSB Pumps	260.00	175.00	230.00	nil
Larsen & Toubro	180.00	57.00	125.50	13.00 +
Lipton	112.00	65.00	81.25	6.25 +
LML Ltd.	83.75	15.00	57.50	7.50 +
Madura Coats	285.00	100.50	258.00	13.00 +
M&M	130.00	67.50	100.00	5.00 +
Milk Food	280.00	115.00	165.00	nil
Motor Industries	1400.00	780.00	950.00	125.00 +
Mukand Ltd.	275.00	127.00	220.00	7.50 +
National Organic	1900.00	1070.00	1450.00	75.00 +
Nestle India	172.50	101.75	147.00	7.00 +
Nirlon	42.50	13.00	27.00	2.00 +
Orkay Silk Mills	61.00	14.50	39.50	5.00 +
Pelco Electronics	78.00	24.00	65.50	3.50 +
Pfizer	113.75	60.00	72.50	7.50 +
Premier Auto	83.00	50.00	59.00	4.00 +
Raymond	175.00	70.00	140.00	17.50 +
Reckitt & Colman	270.00	178.00	255.00	5.00 +
Reliance Industries	245.00	50.00	226.00	59.00 +
Siemens India	162.50	96.00	135.00	5.00 +
Shaw Wallace	122.00	65.00	98.00	13.50 +
Shriram Fibres	74.00	43.00	53.00	3.50 –
SKF Bearings	2775.00	1240.00	2450.00	200.00 +
SPIC	81.00	47.00	59.00	5.00 +
Tata Steel	275.00	103.25	195.00	5.00 +
Telco	272.50	110.00	217.50	7.50 +
Vam Organic	205.00	115.00	175.00	11.25 +
Videocon Int.	600.00	105.00	465.00	43.75 +
Voltas	145.00	63.00	120.00	10.00 +
Wimco	52.50	15.75	30.00	1.50 +

* Ex-bonus

WORLD VALUE OF RUPEE

COUNTRY	CURRENCY	UNIT	TT Selling Rates Rs	TT Buying Rates Rs
Australia	Dollar	1	14.2639	14.1109
Austria	Shilling	100	171.6775	170.8639
Bahrain	Dinar	1	N/A	N/A
Bangladesh	Taka	100	52.1443	51.3565
Canada	Dollar	1	15.6572	15.5824
Denmark	Kroner	1	3.1972	3.1653
Egypt	Pound	1	6.8415	6.7262
France	Franc	1	3.7106	3.6144
Hong Kong	Dollar	1	2.3343	2.3119
Indonesia	Rupiah	100	0.9784	0.9665
Iran	Rial	100	N/A	N/A
Italy	Lira	100	1.6234	1.6052
Japan	Yen	100	14.4509	14.0845
Kenya	Shilling	1	0.7982	0.7837
Malaysia	Dollar	1	6.7406	6.6751
Mauritius	Rupee	1	1.2999	1.2859
Nepal	Rupee	1	0.6352	0.6279
Netherlands	Guilder	1	10.8092	10.7025
Pakistan	Rupee	1	0.8584	0.8463
Singapore	Dollar	1	10.7018	10.5943
Spain	Peseta	1	0.1931	0.1903
Sri Lanka	Rupee	1	4.2820	0.4451
Sweden	Kroner	1	3.2743	3.2421
Switzerland	Franc	1	14.5937	14.4362
Tanzania	Shilling	1	0.0958	0.0824
Thailand	Baht	100	73.3805	71.5322
UK	Pound	1	35.7910	35.5368
USA	Dollar	1	18.1984	18.0261
UAE	Dirham	1	N/A	N/A
USSR	Rouble	1	22.7870	22.7847
Germany	Deutschmark	1	12.4224	12.1711

These rates were supplied by The Bank of Tokyo Limited, New Delhi and quoted between the banks on 7.11.90.

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PHILIPS

A stunning array of international quality sound-machines ranging from compos and double-decks to integrated stereo two-in-ones. Take your pick.



32 watts
P·M·P·O

DR 595

Super Tandem double deck is a sculptured beauty. High speed recording, 3 band graphic equaliser and continuous play make it a great buy.

DR 401

Stylish, good looks great sound make stereo two-in-one international favou

24 watts
P·M·P·O





16
P·M·P·O

DR 403

The super eco Recorder with features lik control for righ channels a external speak socket.



STEREO

Digiuz



16 watts P·M·P·O

DR 403

The super economy Stereo Radio Recorder with smart good looks and features like separate volume control for right and left channels and external speaker socket.

DR 878

Mind blowing sound, sleek good looks coupled with detachable speakers, dual deck, high speed recording, 5 band graphic equaliser and continuous play. A sure bet for great times.

64 P·M·P·O watts



CLARION/B/P/400/266B

O · I N · O N E S

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PHILIPS
S·O·U·N·D
World class



DR 668

Sheer sound power in a fabulous looking body. This compo-stereo two-in-one with detachable speakers and 3 band graphic equaliser takes music to great heights.

32 watts
P·M·P·O



32 watts
P·M·P·O

DR 482

Soft sculptured style and crystal clear sound make this stereo two-in-one an all time hit. Tone and balance control and one touch recording are some of the features.

Quite a mindblowing collection. Right?

To check out our entire audio showcase consisting of the largest range of stereo radio recorders ranging from Rs. 1395 to Rs. 3535 (local taxes extra), drop in to your nearest Philips dealer.

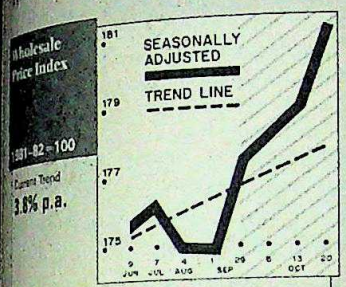


CLARION-B P-100 2BC

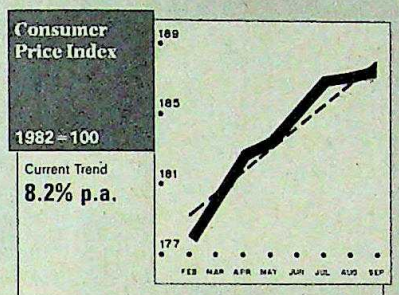
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Exports fell and imports rose, and a balance of payments crisis is likely. The current account deficit can be reduced by curtailing the fiscal deficit. Easing up of monetary policy affected rising wholesale prices. Consumer prices also increased. Double digit inflation is on the cards.

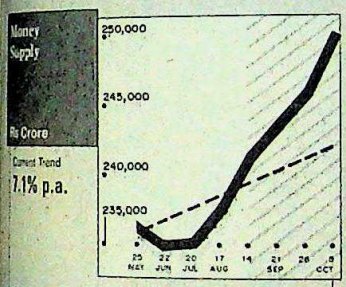
All data are seasonally adjusted. Current trends are computed on the basis of six months' (weekly data) or one-and-a-half years' (monthly data) figures.



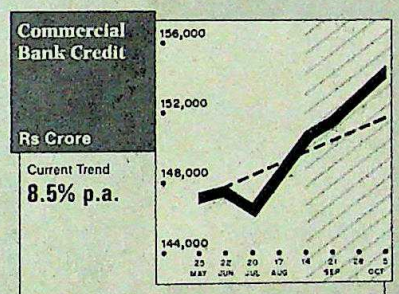
Wholesale prices rose significantly after a relatively stable period—inflation is no longer confined to consumer prices.



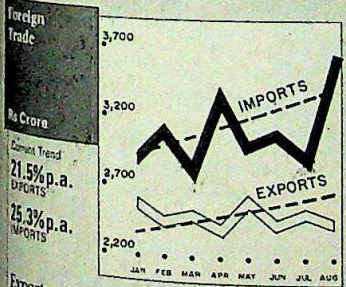
Consumer prices continued their upward trend—by the end of the fiscal year double digit inflation is expected.



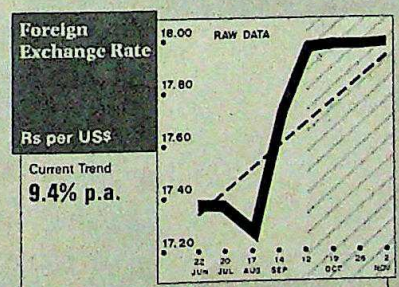
Money supply picked up after a period of stagnancy—this is good for growth but will intensify inflationary pressures.



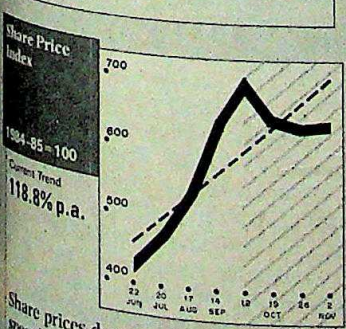
Commercial bank credit continues to grow at an extremely steady rate—this bodes well for industry.



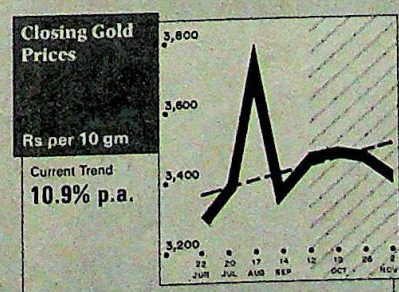
Exports dropped, while imports increased sharply—the Gulf crisis is finally taking its toll.



The rupee depreciated marginally, but not enough to have any significant impact on exports and imports.



Share prices decreased last fortnight—speculatory pressures appeared to be finally tapering off.



Gold prices decreased slightly, an expected drop considering the peak it had attained earlier.

WHOLESALE PRICES

Growth of items in the 1st fortnight of October 1990

	% Growth
Solvent Extracted Oil	15.47
Groundnut Oil	11.37
Khandsari	10.69
Oranges	10.04
Groundnut Seeds	9.95
Turmeric	9.62
Gingelly Oil	9.58
Rails	9.33
Semis Billets	9.01
Fish	8.40
Maize	8.27
Rubber	7.67
Cashew-nut	7.06
Iron Ore	6.50
Barley	6.45
Plates & Sheets	5.00
Groundnut Oilcake	4.69
Urad	4.50
Vanaspati	4.46
Steel Structurals	4.41
Skelp	4.26
Jowar	3.99
Eggs	3.93
Boilers	3.66
Bajra	3.57
Steel Furniture	3.50
Ragi	3.18
Maida	3.17
Cotton Yarn	3.16
Sugar	2.99
Linseed Oil	2.90
Coffee	2.72
Internal Combustion Engines	2.62
Gingelly Seed	2.59
Bananas	2.57
Pig Iron	2.37
Tea	2.15
Tubes	2.13
Soda Ash	2.12
Ghee	2.12
Caustic Soda	2.09
Arhar	2.02
Gur	2.00
Rice	1.99
Electricity	1.97
Copper & Alloys	1.68
Silk Raw	1.67

Of the 134 series considered, 103 of them with a total weight of 68.471 had a positive rate of growth and 31 of them with a total weight of 16.381 had a negative rate of growth.

SELECTED INDICATORS

	1990	1989
Petroleum Crude Thousand Tonnes, September	2480	2762
Petroleum Refinery Product Thousand Tonnes, September	3643	3482
Letters of Intent Numbers, September	827	915
Industrial Licences Issued Numbers, September	271	317
Call Money Rate Per cent, September	1479.75	1012.50

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Distorted Priorities

GRASS WITHOUT ROOTS



By BUNKER ROY

THE scientific community can send a satellite into space but cannot solve, inexpensively, the basic problems of drinking water. They write papers by the hundreds and strut around when they are accepted by a foreign journal but when it comes to doing basic manual labour in villages they are nowhere to be seen.

Within the four walls of their laboratories surrounded by instruments they act and talk like supermen. In a completely different setting where there are more challenges to their scientific disciplines, they act and talk like pygmies.

Great brains in scientific institutions in India are spending their time tackling the personal problems of peons and transferring people who they perceive as a threat.

Innovations that could help improve the quality of life of the rural poor lie rusting in research laboratories because there is no money to replicate them on a large scale or someone with a big ego problem has deliberately sat on it refusing to let a junior get all the glory.

It is one big mess because priorities of scientists are so distorted. Projects that will give international recognition are preferred because they lead to personal advancement: it's immaterial if the project has no relevance to basic ground realities. If money attached to it along with time and physical comforts is good it has lots of takers.

But basic vital research on preventive health, low cost housing materials, solutions to water-borne diseases, alternative energy application like solar or wind for lighting in inaccessible areas are avoided like the plague.

Of course there exist far too many who talk about it just to be different. On some little pipsqueak of an effort somewhere many have risen to the level of their incompetence to start drafting policy papers and becoming self-styled authorities on the subject.

Thus it is fitting that technologists can waste days and weeks changing key words in a housing policy which eventually means nothing to the man on the street, but they have absolutely no time to build houses for the poor.

It is but to be expected that the very people who speak extremely eloquently about the hand flush pit latrines are those who have never even squatted on one themselves. Those who talk about the innumerable advantages of hand pumps cannot survive without piped water supply systems in their own homes.

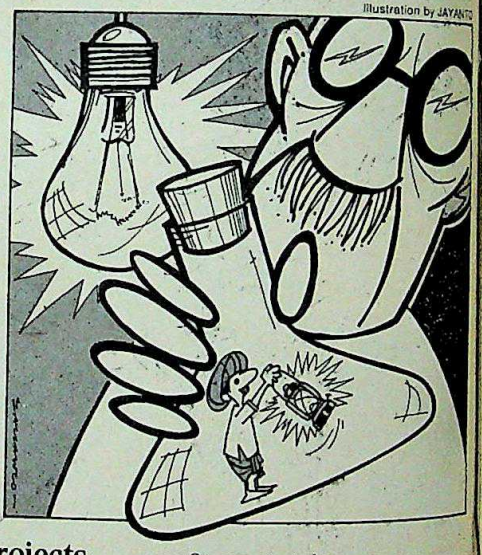
Scientists who design improved kerosene lamps find it hard to work without electricity. Technologists who propagate the magic of smokeless *chulas* themselves use gas and electricity. It's good to talk about bio-gas but so long as someone else has to use it, the question of putting one in your own home just does not arise.

By setting such a poor example, scientists are making sound inexpensive technologies look second-rate. The point is if you believe in it then you should be the first to practise it and show your faith. Only then will the community follow suit.

What makes matters worse is that scientists are poor communicators of their own work. When they talk of others' achievements, they sound catty, vindictive and petty.

But when it comes to sharing information so that the society may ultimately benefit, they start behaving like little precocious children because personal recognition and perhaps some financial profit are at stake.

Illustration by JAYANTO



The projects that promise international recognition have a lot of takers while research on issues which affect the rural poor is avoided.

As a result, scientific work of a high calibre is going on in extreme isolation. If and when the technical conclusions do get demystified and reach the grassroots, if they do survive all the red tape and there is a possibility of their being replicated—and there are numerous examples of such miracles taking place—then the rural community will benefit considerably.

The answer is to demystify the processes of disseminating technology to the field. Expose the scientific community to the rural areas so that the learning and unlearning processes can begin for both sides. The exposure should not be one time but on a sustained basis. Only then will the scientists and technologists understand how irrelevant their research has been so far and more basic problems will attract their attention.

As of now, they might as well migrate and settle down in the West.

The author is Director, The Social Work & Research Centre, Tilonia, Rajasthan

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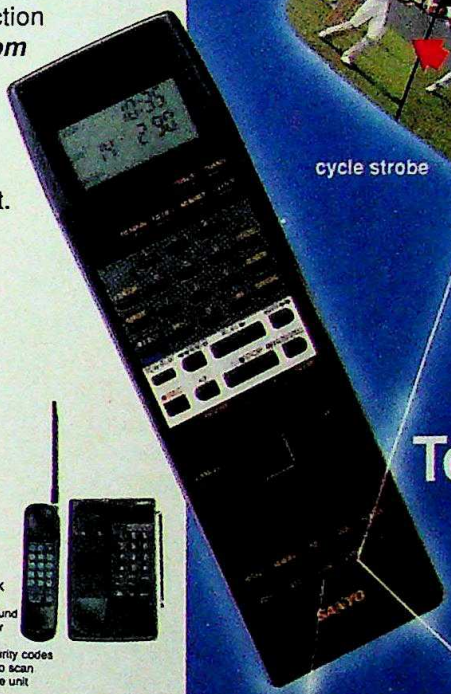
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Yes, the action is hot with Sanyo VHR-D5600PS. And all at the touch of buttons too. Because unlike most other players, the VHR-D5600PS offers a whole new dimension in video cassette technology. Like the ***cycle strobe***, it gives you 8 still picture segments around a moving central picture. And the



mono strobe, which offers a more detailed analysis of fast action scenes. You can even ***zoom*** in for a closer look at a particular scene. In all, 38 revolutionary features for a new era of action in digital home entertainment.



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Actions To Bowl You Over!

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The Ultimate Sound Debut. Sanyo BASSURROUND. MCD 955F.
- BASSURROUND sound with Extended Bass Sound System and Surround Sound System
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Static free cordless telephone-TALK SMART-CLT-88
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- 256 digital security codes 10-channel auto scan
- Keypad on base unit

ZEEMA VM-E588/P



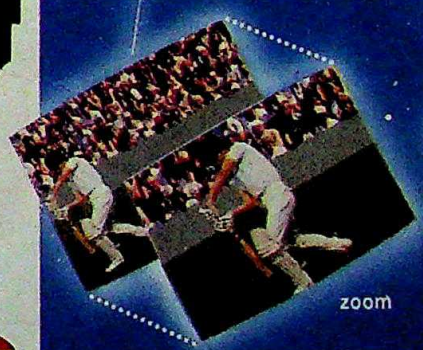
The revolutionary 8mm Camcorder with Fuzzy Logic technology. VM-E588P
- Ergonomically-designed and extremely lightweight, 810g
- Revolutionary FUZZY Logic auto focus and auto exposure (AE)
- 64 Segment TTL auto white balance



33"

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Spot five greens, three blues, four yellows

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For sup ght p

Super plu

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"Thank God for someone like her"

She loves me for my hardworking ways.
She also fights because of them.
She likes my getting ahead in life and the presents I get her.
She dislikes the demands made upon me and my time.
It's not that she doesn't understand, but I guess it gets too much for her. (And there's little I can do about it).
She gives me tips to stay healthy and look good. She also hates the looks others give me.
She even sees to it that I don't suffer from the problems normally associated with someone like me. High-cholesterol, hyperacidity, gas and indigestion.
You know it's because of those two Garlic Pearls she gives me everyday.
I often wonder what I'd do without her.
And whenever someone compares me with friends my age, I silently thank God for a wife like her.
But she always says.
"Thanks to Garlic Pearls"



RANBAXY'S
GARLIC
PEARLS

EASY-TO-GET GARLIC GOODNESS

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HARIJAN LEADERSHIP

The Race is On

With the issue of caste acquiring a new prominence, the struggle for Harijan leadership is gathering rapid momentum.

By BHASKAR ROY

RAM Vilas Paswan appears with increasing frequency on Doordarshan news. Kanshiram's Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP)—now the fifth largest party in the country going by the total votes polled during the last poll—organises a huge rally at the capital's Ramleela Grounds. Jagjivan Ram's daughter Meera Kumar launches the Samta Andolan (equality movement) which plasters its graffiti on all the Harijan colonies in Delhi.

There is one common strand linking these isolated activities—Kanshiram, Paswan and Meera Kumar are waging a battle for the nation's Harijan leadership. If the battleground is restricted to the north it is because political parties in the south have traditionally met the aspirations of the lower castes. In the north, on the other hand, no single leader has been able to fill the leadership vacuum created after Jagjivan Ram's death in 1986. In an era of renewed casteist assertions, the race is on to wrest the leadership of the Harijans, who comprise about 15 per cent of the country's populace, and have 79 reserved seats in Parliament.

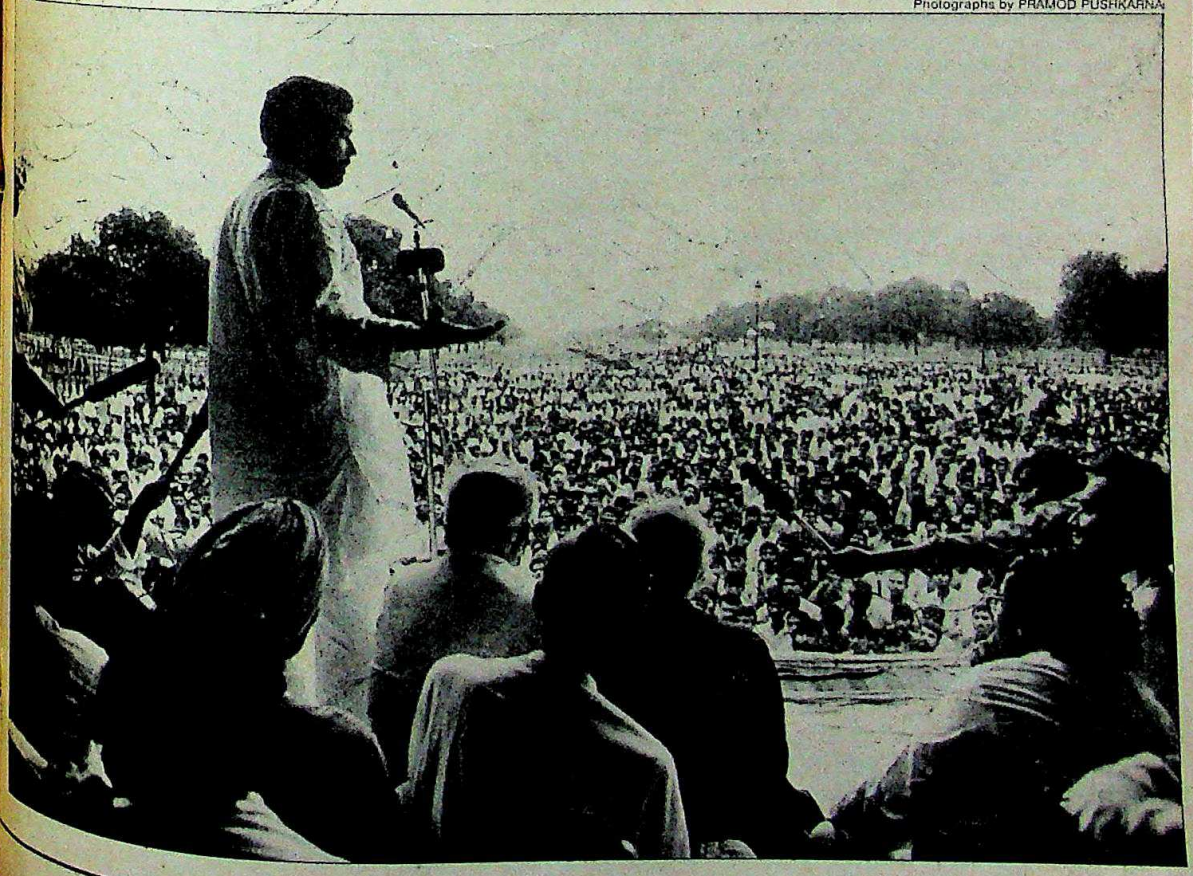
So far, Kanshiram is clearly far ahead of the rest. His impressive rise in just six years has rewritten political equations in electorally crucial Uttar Pradesh. From being a maverick, shunned by the mainstream parties for his casteist politics, today he is one of the most sought after electoral allies. Though the BSP hasn't won many seats—at present three in the Lok Sabha; 13 in the Uttar Pradesh Assembly; and two in Madhya Pradesh Assembly—it has weaned away a chunk of Harijans from the Congress(I)'s traditional vote bank, thereby ensuring that party's defeat. Elated by his party's poll performance, Kanshiram now boasts: "If the next elections come after six months we will definitely be the second largest party."

The claim may be slightly far-fetched, especially if V.P. Singh's strategy

> **Paswan is being projected as a young, militant leader of the oppressed castes.**

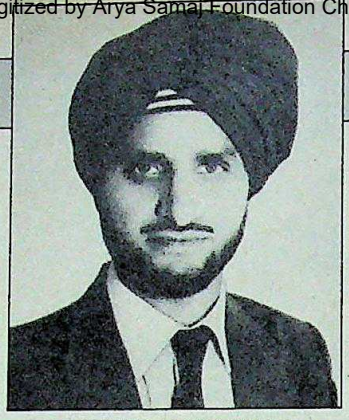
Paswan at a pro-reservation rally

Photographs by PRAMOD PUSHKARNA



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AUTOMOTIVE TY

SPEECH OF CHAIRMAN
MR ONKAR S KANWAR
AUTOMOTIVE TYRE MANUFACTURERS' ASSOCIATION
DELIVERED AT THE FIFTEENTH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
HELD ON TUESDAY 30TH OCTOBER 1990
AT TAJ MAHAL INTERCONTINENTAL, BOMBAY

Friends,
I am very happy to welcome you all to the Fifteenth Annual General Meeting of the Automotive Tyre Manufacturers' Association.

National Economy
Massive investment of the order of over Rs. 6 lacs crores in the Eighth Plan and opening up of the economy do indeed augur well for rapid and high industrial development. Experts have opined that over 30% growth in real terms could be expected during the Eighth Plan compared to Seventh Plan. Political uncertainties in the country and the oil crisis are of course, disquieting factors. With an all round price increase, inflation spiral is on cards, though uncertainties prevail on whether the country is in for stagflation in the next few years. However, there is a ray of hope. The economic and industrial growth achieved in the country have imparted sufficient resilience to the economy to absorb such jolts and move ahead. Much would, however, depend on the sound management of the socio-political challenges facing the Government.

Tyre Industry
There has been substantial production growth in various categories of tyres during January-August 1990 compared to the same period of previous year. On the export front, the industry has targetted to achieve tyre export of Rs. 200 crores in 1990-91 as against export of Rs. 153 crores in 1989-90. Four new large scale tyre factories are being set up, out of which one would start production this year and the other three by next year. The radialisation era has begun in the Indian tyre industry. The cost pressure on tyre has been unabated during the year. In fact, the 25% across the board increase in price of petroleum products would result in steep increases in many of the raw materials consumed by the tyre industry particularly as over 60% of the tyre raw materials are petro based. The Excise Duty hike on tyres in the last Union Budget and also increase in the Customs Duty on Natural rubber have increased the total tax incidence on tyres and consequent increase in tyre prices.

Tyre Production
There has been substantial production growth during January-August 1990 compared to January-August 1989 in all categories of tyres, except truck and bus tyres, as would be evident from the details given below:

% Growth in production of Tyres for :

Passenger car	-	22%
Tractor front	-	23%
Tractor trailer	-	42%
Light truck	-	19%
Animal Drawn Vehicles	-	24%
Scooter	-	9%
Aeroplane	-	46%

In the case of truck and bus tyres there has been hardly any demand growth during the year which explains the meagre production growth of only 1%. The somewhat stunted demand growth has been attributed to a number of factors. The first in my opinion is the continuous increase in the initial tyre mileage achieved through sustained technological upgradation. Secondly, the welcome measure of Government in curtailing overloading of trucks through provisions of the Motor Vehicle Act has resulted in tyre mileage going up. Further, with less overloading, the cuts and damages to tyres have also lessened with the result most of tyres could be retreaded. Increased use of cold retreading has also been attributed as one of the causes for the slackening of demand growth for fresh tyres. Despite the upheavels in various parts of the country during the last few months, the tyre market is showing buoyancy and hopefully this would continue. With substantial expansion of production capacities by some of the existing companies and setting up of four new large scale tyre manufacturing plants between now and next year, the production of all categories of tyres is bound to increase. It is a matter of satisfaction that during the last two years no shortages of any category of tyres have been felt by any of the consuming segments. This is a happy news to the tyre consumers. But the days ahead are better. An assessment of the tyre demand growth and production growth for the next five years made by the Association clearly indicates that for once it has become a buyers' market for tyres. In fact many in the industry feel that with production growth being at a much faster pace than demand grow market would continue to have over in level in the years ahead. Tentative est made by our Association indicate that t production of tyres which reached a 19.46 million nos. in 1989-90, i.e., an year of Seventh plan would go upto 25 nos. by 1994-95, i.e., during the last Eighth Plan i.e., a projected increase o

Exports
Tyre industry could be legitimately proud quantum jump in the exports achieved 90. As against export of Rs.77 crores 89, the export in 1989-90 was Rs.153 For 1990-91 the tyre industry has ev impressive plan to increase exports t crores level. All large tyre companies are export strategies so that the momen exports gained during last two years continue to be maintained and could pos improved upon during the Eighth Plan. C 18% of the truck/bus tyres produced country is exported. With tyre manuf being a complicated process involving sciences, such as, physics, chem metallurgy, textile, computer and poly indeed is a remarkable achievement. to look at this performance in the contex transnational tyre companies making efforts to increase their share of expor world market. Indian tyre companies, anywhere one fourth to one tenth of the international tyre companies, have to in the world market with such an disadvantage. With tyre production becoming surplus to demand, the compa the world markets has become intens sustained marketing efforts and not trading by Indian tyre companies upgradation, adhering to delivery sc manufacturing tyres to specifications international markets, etc., are the main for the commendable tyre export achieved. The tyre industry has v decided to export 25% of its truck and b production. Indian tyres are exported t countries, with over 25% going to a conscious market like USA. Many of companies are now engaged in explo markets, increasing the share in various and export of other categories of tyres, tractor tyres, Passenger car tyres, etc matter of satisfaction that Indian tyre has taken up export as a major activity the industry faces a number of handica form of inadequate CCS, stringent rules of duty free raw materials, etc.

Tyre demand growth
With an investment of Rs. 6 lac crores Plan resulting in over 30% growth in in Eighth Plan compared to Seventh P automobile revolution in full swing, w not being able to meet fully the passen goods movement growth requiring transport to increase its share in trans of goods and passengers and development of backward regions

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ANUFACTURERS' ASSOCIATION

...ortation of goods and passengers to far off ...the transport sector is expected to grow ...pace in the years ahead and so also the ...and growth. Going by the experience of ...ised countries where the development ...sport sector preceded the industrial ...ment and taking into account the fact ...country is poised at a take off stage, ...is an exciting period ahead for both the ...sport sector and tyre sector. The only area ...is causing concern is the unsatisfactory ...elopment. It is the hope that the ...ment would attach more importance to ...ment and allocate the required resources ...roving the roads.

...lisation

...manufacturing during the last over 100 ...to other development has been as ...mark as invention of radial tyres. The change ...process from cross ply/bias tyres to radials, ...explained, looks simple. The reinforcement ...was used for manufacture of tyres would be ...ged from nylon tyre cord to steel/glass fibre/ ...ster. And that in radial tyres, the cords ...be placed at 90° from bead to bead ...ad in diagonal form as in cross ply tyres. ...tyres give 25% to 40% higher mileage ...ared to conventional tyres. This in itself is ...ge factor. Secondly, 5% to 7% fuel saving ...in the use of radial tyres compared to ...entional tyres. With increased mileage, ...the total tyres required to meet the ...would be less and to that extent there ...be less consumption of raw materials. As ...ary, from the country's point of view, ...ould be more efficient use of raw materials. ...need not emphasise the fuel saving aspect. ...sport angle is also equally important. With ...ialised world changing over to radial tyres, ...sport prospects of the cross ply tyres would ...shrinking. Conversely, there would be ...markets for radial tyres. Hence from the ...view of increasing exports, there is no ...option but to switch over to radial tyre ...ction.

...ny type of vehicles coming in the Indian ...are suited for radial tyre fitment. This ...also give thrust to radial tyre production. ...assessment made by our Association ...cates that by 1994-95, out of the car tyres ...ced, 40% will be radials. In the case of ...Commercial Vehicle tyres, the estimate is ...would be 25% of the total tyre production ...1995. And in truck tyres, this is expected ...be 10%. As happened in other countries, ...the changeover to radialisation reaches ...point, then the pace of changeover gets ...erated. In other words, in the Ninth Plan, ...radialisation race would be in fast gear. ...no doubt radialisation of tyres would give ...benefits to the tyre consumers and would ...the tyre industry in increasing exports, ...ential changeover from production of cross ...es to radial tyres poses a number of ...ems. Firstly, high investment would be ...ed for such changeover. Tyre companies ...to raise substantial resources internally, ...from taking recourse to institutional funds and public subscriptions. Secondly, with increasing mileage obtained from radial tyres, the demand growth for tyres would become somewhat stunted. If this is to happen, along with substantial increase in production of tyres, the alternatives left are, either to reduce capacity utilisation or export radial tyres in a major way. These are indeed daunting questions.

Yet it is a measure of the maturity of Indian entrepreneurs in the tyre industry that they have decided to go ahead with radialisation and meet the challenge head on.

This is not surprising if one looks at the past history of Indian tyre industry. The industry has never been content with increasing production to meet the growth in demand but has been endeavouring to improve the quality of tyres, to broaden the category of tyres manufactured and to increase exports. Thanks to Government allowing technical collaboration of Indian tyre companies with leading transnational tyre companies, the technology inflow has been smooth. This technology inflow mainly encompasses the fruits of in depth research in the interplay of multifarious technical disciplines underlying the highly sophisticated tyre technology. Such basic research in tyre technology is extremely costly which the Indian tyre companies cannot afford but because of the technical collaboration they are able to obtain it at a nominal cost. Over the years Indian tyre companies had become adept in unpacking such technology and tailoring it to Indian needs. This in itself entails considerable inhouse R&D. That the Indian tyre industry has been manufacturing quality tyres weighing 1.5 kg. for Mopeds to over a tonne weighing giant OTR tyres, Aero tyres and Defence application tyres, is adequate testimonial for the resilience shown by the industry in adapting to the changing needs and ever increasing domestic requirement.

Raw Materials

Most of the raw materials required for manufacture of tyres are petro based products. Across the board price increase of 25% on petroleum products effected by Government recently would inevitably result in steep increase in prices of these raw materials and consequently there would be tremendous pressure on production cost of tyres. Already the prices of Carbon Black and Polybutadiene Rubber have been increased by 20% and 10.8% respectively. The recent hike in Import Duty rate on Natural rubber from 35% to 48% would further aggravate the cost push on tyres.

On Natural rubber the tyre industry is dismayed at the agitation mounted by the rubber growers' lobby demanding very high price for rubber, unrelated to cost of production. The tyre industry has repeatedly indicated to Government and rubber growers' that the tyre industry would be willing to pay cost plus price for Natural rubber and that the Government is the best agency to determine what the cost plus price should be. Unfortunately it would appear that the rubber growers' lobby is not prepared to accept such a cost plus price but wants a very high price. Needless to say this is not justified. The price of Styrene Butadiene (SBR) has been increased by 49% during the last over two years unrelated to production cost increase. It is noticed that the monopoly position in manufacturing SBR is being exploited by the manufacturer to increase the price of SBR frequently.

Tyre Production Cost

With all round increase in raw material prices, mainly caused by 25% across the board increase in price of petroleum products, cost of production of tyres would be under intense pressure. Tyre industry is essentially a convertor industry. And like all convertor industries, the raw material cost is a major production cost item. Further, in such an industry the capacity to absorb production cost is somewhat limited. In the event, for tyre companies to function viably the input cost increases have to be transferred to output prices.

R&D Centre for tyres

Two years back our Association decided to set up a cooperative tyre Research Centre. The cost then estimated Rs. 20 crores has gone up to Rs. 30 crores now. I am happy to say that there has been good progress in the setting up of the Research Centre. 10 acres of land has been acquired in Hosakote near Bangalore for the Research Centre. On the request of tyre industry the Government is positively considering the feasibility of partly funding the Research Centre from external aid.

Interface between tyre industry and other segments

Two years back our Association started interface with some of the raw material manufactures and tyre consuming segments. Such bipartite meetings have not only helped in better appreciation of respective positions but have also resulted in solving many problems. Our Association proposes to start similar dialogue with other raw material and tyre consuming segments.

Future of tyre Industry

With substantial growth in production of tyres envisaged, steady growth in tyre exports and increased pace of radialisation, the tyre industry has a challenging period ahead. With production becoming surplus to demand there would be increased competition for market shares. Technology upgradation would receive more attention so that product quality improves. The race is on in the Indian tyre industry.

CONCLUSION

During the year under review our Association had very useful dialogue with officials of Ministry of Industry, Ministry of Commerce, DGTD and STC. These dialogues have enabled better appreciation in these departments on the approach taken by tyre industry on various matters. I would like to take this opportunity to record the gratitude of the tyre industry to the officials of these departments.

Thank you.

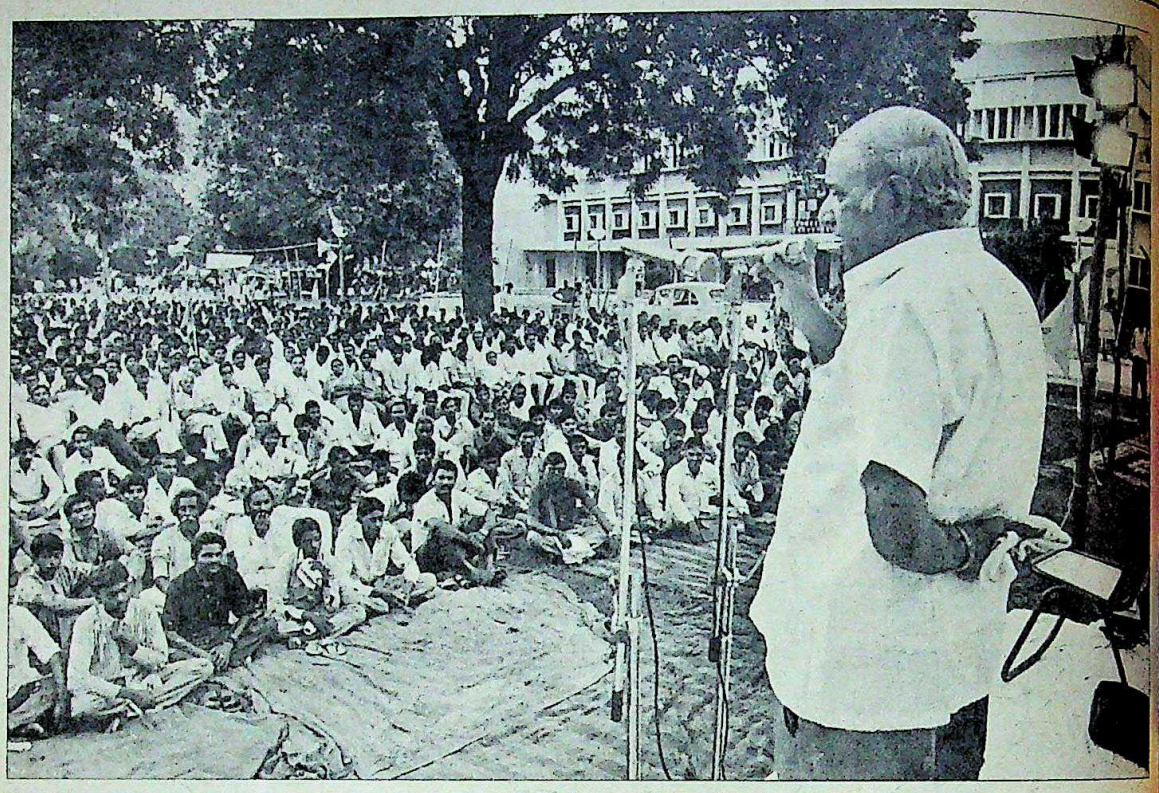
ONKAR .S. KANWAR

ATMA
AUTOMOTIVE TYRE MANUFACTURERS' ASSOCIATION
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Kanshiram at BSP's Delhi rally: growing clout

to project some Harijan leaders from within the ranks of the Janata Dal succeeds. The youthful Paswan—who suddenly became the most visible of the ruling party's ministers—clearly had Singh's blessings. He has been addressing numerous public meetings where he presents himself as a champion of the oppressed. That Paswan is trying to extend his base to include the backwards is evident; he is one of the most vocal supporters of the Mandal Commission report and openly boasts that the Janata Dal is the first party to bring the backwards, Harijans and Muslims on the same platform.

That is precisely the constituency that Kanshiram is wooing and naturally there is no love lost between the two men. Particularly as Paswan has had some success in winning the loyalty of Harijan government employees' unions that have all along been the backbone of the BSP. Dismissing the BSP as a passing phenomenon, Paswan argues that the interests of the oppressed are safe with mainstream parties. Says he: "Parties in the name of a caste or community have no future; the downtrodden have to be brought into the national mainstream."

Kanshiram on his part is adamant that the BSP is here to stay. Breaking his silence with the Indian press, he told INDIA TODAY: "It is our duty to make the BSP a real mainstream party as we constitute the majority of the country's population." He adds that political parties have suddenly woken up to the realisation that Harijan support is thinning rapidly and are therefore busy "projecting the Ram Vilas Paswans".

Kanshiram is one of the most sought after electoral allies in the Hindi belt.

NOT that Paswan is the sole Harijan leader in the Janata Dal. Too cautious to place all his eggs in the same basket, Singh had also rehabilitated a number of other Harijan leaders, besides enacting several legislations benefiting Dalits. Ram Dhan—one of the founders of the Jan Morcha who later fell out with Singh—was even appointed chairman of the National Commission for the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes.

Similarly, the youthful Prakash Ambedkar, grandson of Dr B.R. Ambedkar, recently quit his Republican Party—which has some support among the Dalits of Maharashtra—and by holding out the promise of joining the Janata Dal, earned himself a Rajya Sabha nomination. But these are still leaders waiting in the wings while Paswan occupies centre stage and remains the Janata Dal's spokesman on Harijan issues.

Traditionally, in the Hindi heartland, Harijans along with the Muslims and Brahmins have formed one of the Congress(I)'s biggest vote banks—till the BSP eroded it. Now, with the Janata Dal also projecting high-profile Harijan leaders, the Harijan support base of the Congress(I) is threatened even further. To compound matters the Congress(I) does not have a recognisable Harijan leader. Meera Kumar has the potential, but the party is yet to tap it. Inexplicably, the Congress(I) has neglected her.

The launch of the Samta Andolan clearly indicates that Meera is set to strike out on her own. Determined to build the Andolan into an all-India organisation, she has begun addressing rallies in different states. Though Meera was one of the many Congress(I) nominees who lost out in the face of the anti-Congress(I) wave during the last elections, her crowd-pulling ability remains undeniable.

While Kanshiram and Paswan have cast themselves in the mould of militant Harijan leaders who advocate

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ROYAL SURRENDER

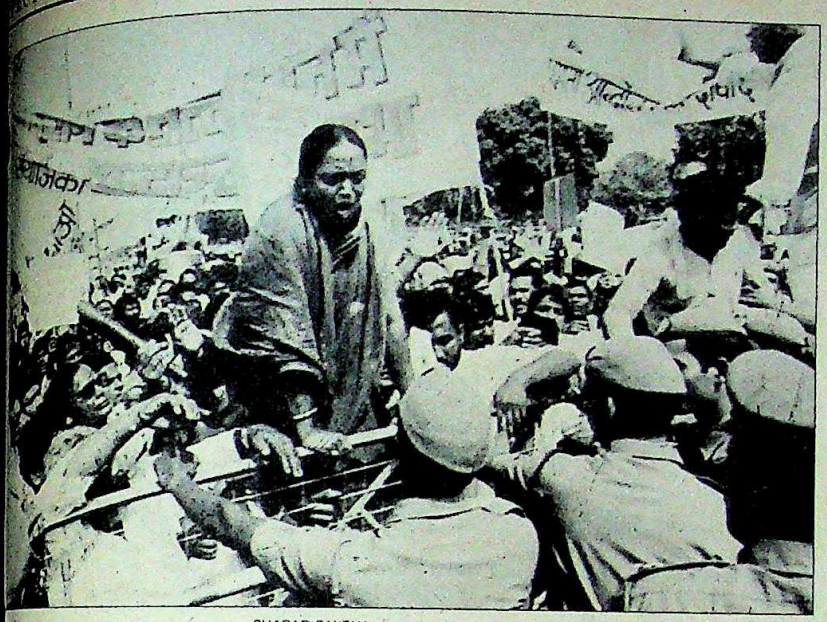
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ROAST ALMOND

Cadbury's
CLASSIC SELECTION
ROAST ALMOND
Because there's more to chocolates than chocolate

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IFB

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SHARAD SAXENA



Meera Kumar leads her supporters (top); Buta Singh sits on dharna

aggressive caste politics, Meera's stance is non-confrontationist, even mellow. She views social oppression essentially a human rights problem and strictly adheres to her father's belief in caste synthesis. Strongly against the BSP's brand of politics, she says: "Kanshiram has abused and antagonised everybody other than the Harijans and in the process alienated them from the rest of society." She blames the provocative utterances of BSP leaders for the recent caste riots in Agra and charges the party with vitiating the atmosphere so much that others did not come to the aid of Harijans after the riots.

MEERA who, like her late father, clearly intends to follow the path of moderation, believes that the "casteist theory of Ambedkar has not really worked". Kanshiram and Paswan on the other hand both swear by Dr Ambedkar. Kanshiram, in fact, holds Jagjivan Ram responsible for the division in the Dalit movement and describes him as a "hindrance in the path of Dr Ambedkar". He is, of course, quick to add that the BSP is now finally filling the void created by Ambedkar's death. Paswan too claims to be an interpretor of Ambedkar's legacy and projects Jagjivan Ram's moderation as a setback. "Jagjivan Babu had always been aligned to the *gaddi*," he says.

Besides Meera another Congress(I) politician is trying to emerge as the saviour of the lower castes—former home minister Buta Singh. In recent weeks Delhi has been plastered with multi-coloured posters announcing Buta Singh's participation either in scavengers' rallies or Valmiki Jayanti celebrations. Having recently floated the All India Safai Mazdoor Congress, he is busy visiting different states to set up its units. He claims to have already visited 30-odd districts of Uttar Pradesh, Haryana, Punjab and Rajasthan and now intends to spread his organisation among farm labourers, a majority of whom are Harijans. Buta Singh blames the "casteist" attitude of some party chief ministers for the absence of any Harijan leader of stature in the Congress(I) and says: "Some of our chief ministers did not implement the Congress(I) programmes for Harijans. As a result they got alienated and these negative sentiments were behind the rise of Kanshiram."

If Buta Singh's efforts to emerge as a leader of the oppressed are more laughable than laudable, it is because he is undoubtedly playing opportunistic politics. Cast aside by his own Sikh community and out of favour with the Congress(I) leadership, he has suddenly taken to playing the caste card (Singh is a Majhabi Sikh, the lowest caste in the community) in an obvious attempt to resurrect his political career.

With caste equations hardening, the Harijan leaders' power is on the increase. Take Kanshiram who is sought after by Mulayam Singh Yadav, Devi Lal and others. Today he is riding high and does not miss an opportunity to wax eloquent about his "indispensability". ("If I join hands with Mulayam Singh the alliance is sure to sweep any elections in Uttar Pradesh," is a typical Kanshiram statement.) He also denies that his politics exacerbates caste tensions and says: "We want to annihilate caste, for we have been its victims."

Kanshiram and his ilk appear to believe that they can achieve this by setting up caste versus caste, far removed from the gentle tolerance preached by the Mahatma. Clearly in an age of militant postures and hardening caste barriers, the Mahatma's legacy to the downtrodden castes—which includes the very word Harijan—appears to have been all but forgotten.

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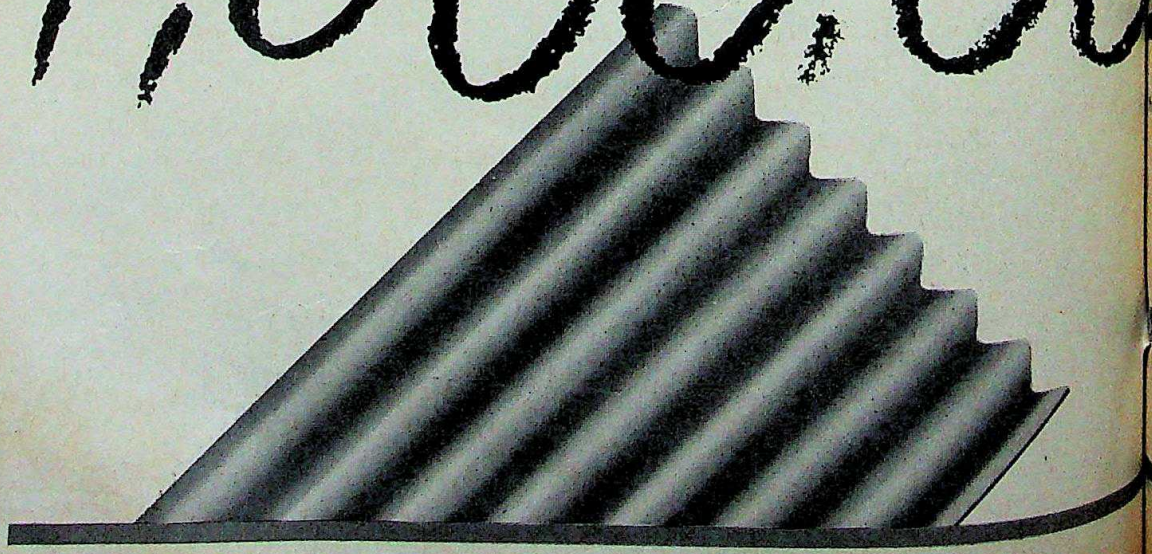
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SUMMED UP WIT

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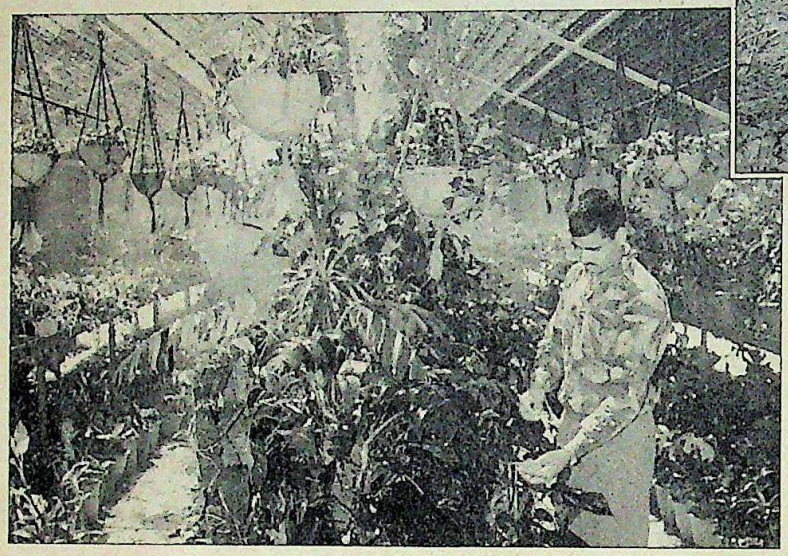
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HERBS

Spicy Sensation

Exotic herbs add new flavour to cooking





A herb garden; and (inset) artemisia: a new hobby

THE connoisseurs among the glitterati are no longer happy sniffing the aroma of saffron before plunging a silver fork into *rogan josh*. They are looking for something more adventurous. Enter exotic herbs. Hotels, sensing the new culinary trend, are now focussing on a clientele that knows how an authentic Italian or French dish should taste. *Jeera, haldi* and *dhania* are spices that have distinct flavours and they have dominated Indian cooking for years. Continental cuisine, on the other hand, is a blend of aromatic herbs which have slightly more delicate flavours.

With fresh herbs so widely available, their poor relations—the dried variety—will always lag behind as a second choice, used only out of necessity in the lean summer months. But hotels are increasingly making sure that their supply of fresh herbs is assured by growing them in their own backyard. The Oberoi chain has a 70-acre farm with two and a half acres devoted to herb cultivation. The Maurya chain has a 23-acre farm in Agra of which one acre is used for growing herbs and exotic vegetables. According to chef Manjit S. Gill: "There is a marked increase in the use of herbs as Indians increasingly turn to international cuisine."

Not every hotel has a farm or even plans to have one. Holiday Inn is quite happy with its local suppliers and with imports from abroad. And Ashok Radisson has actually done an about turn. It started growing herbs under the supervision of its former chefs, but switched to local suppliers when it found the task hard going.

The appearance of herbs in the market-place does not, of course, mean that they are for everyone. Like most imports, they have a status symbol attached to them, a certain cachet not unlike that attached to a designer label outfit. But their appearance does mean that the Indian housewife is willing to experiment by using them in her own kitchen. Says Mamta Malhotra: "I bought some chives and parsley after a trip abroad and use them quite often in my Kashmiri cooking." According to Jiggs Kalra, a cuisine expert, dill adds a whole new dimension to *sarson ka saag* while fenugreek in *kasuri ki methi* imparts a rich and unique taste.

While many are willing to experiment, the price acts as a deterrent for those on a fixed budget. A 10-gram packet of dried basil costs Rs 28 in the shops, while oregano, thyme and marjoram are slightly higher at Rs 35. The markup in the shops is between 20 and 25 per cent. The upper range of fresh herbs which are more difficult to grow can cost anywhere between Rs 200 and Rs 300 a kilo.

Leaving aside the big cities, enquiries from small towns show that a growing clientele exists in scattered pockets around the country which makes use of a wide range of continental herbs. Growers and suppliers are beaming with delight at the development. Kavita Ratra of the Bamboo Basket which supplies herbs to most of the five-star hotels in Delhi, says: "When we started growing European mint nobody thought it would work but then we introduced it in *paneer parathas* and it's been a great success." Exotic herbs, it seems, are here to stay—and grow. —KUSUM SAWHNEY

Pick Of The Pops

Tarragon: an aristocratic herb which adds a fresh flavour to salads with its pungent aroma. It also makes a delicious wine vinegar.

Basil: has a warm spicy flavour that sends cooks into raptures and is a cousin of the tulsi family. It's as pungent as garlic and together they combine to make the classic pesto sauce used in pasta.

Oregano: a must for pizzas and quiches, otherwise they taste indifferent. Oregano, for example, is an essential ingredient for lasagne.

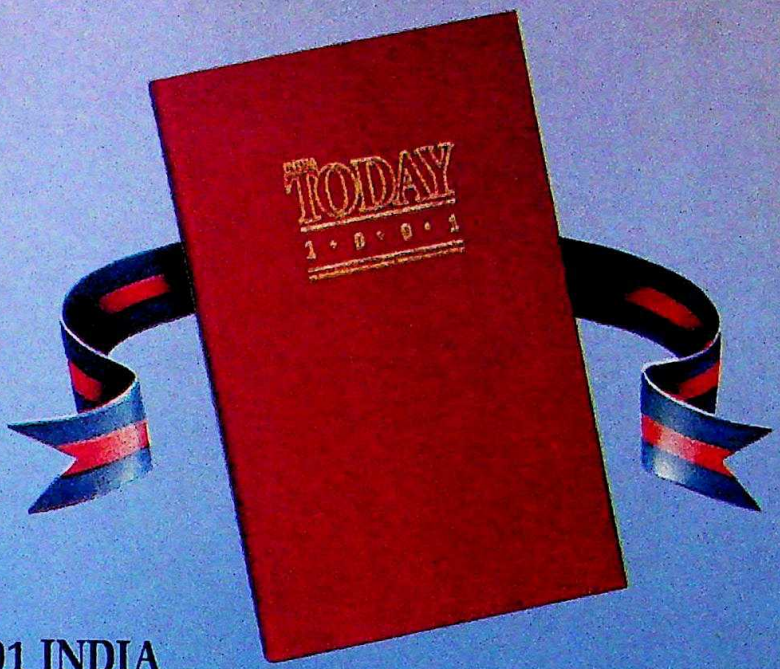
Rosemary: An ancient emblem of fidelity for lovers. Rosemary, with its distinctive aroma, adds the necessary flavour to well-known beef-based continental dishes. Can also be combined with a lavender flower infusion to make an effective pick-me-up for depression.

Sage: its aromatic leaves have traditionally been used in pork and duck preparations to help digestion.

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ORISSA

Return of the Idol

The 12th century Garuda statue is back in Puri

THE Bhubaneswar-bound flight from Delhi carried an unusual passenger. He had been given a warm send-off at the VIP lounge by high-ranking officials. Once on board, the cabin crew including the pilot, came to pay obeisance with folded hands. At the other end, Bhubaneswar airport wore all the paraphernalia used to greet the high and mighty—a large posse of security guards and a noisy crowd of well-wishers.

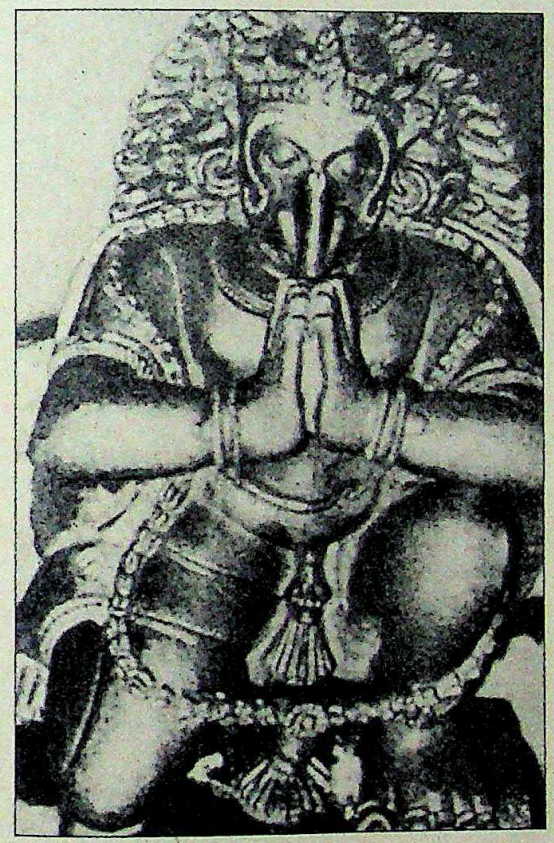
None of the other passengers begrudged the VIP his special treatment. For he was more than a mere mortal. It was, in fact, a priceless 12th century granite statue of Garuda, the half-man half-bird vehicle used by Lord Vishnu. Known as the foremost disciple of Lord Jagannath, Garuda is believed to have whisked Lord Krishna to the hall in time to save Draupadi from the dishonour of being disrobed by the Kauravas.

Having been stolen by a gang of art thieves five years ago, the statue (weighing 40 kg and 15 inches high) was finally returning to its original home—the Sri Gundicha temple in Puri, Orissa. The homecoming had been long delayed. Although it was retrieved by the CBI three years ago, in a lightning strike just moments before the thieves put it on a flight out of India, the statue then fell into the much more tenacious clutches of the Indian legal system.

It was locked up inside a store-room while the CBI and the Orissa Government waged a protracted legal tussle over who its rightful owner was. The stakes were high. The one and a half feet high Garuda has been valued at Rs 14 crore in the international antique market. And once back in its original pedestal it could continue to be a major temptation for art thieves. Both the temple and the town do not currently have the infrastructure to prevent yet another attempt at lifting the magnificent granite idol.

The Orissa Government eventually won the battle to regain possession of the prized 12th century relic after much difficulty. The battle is not yet over for it may be some months before the statue is restored to its pedestal at the Sri Gundicha temple from where the thieves chiselled it away. The case against the thieves is still pending in Delhi and since the idol itself is the main piece of evidence against them, it may have to be produced in court from time to time adding to the complications of the case.

12th century Garuda: precious relic



It will be a while before the idol is restored to its temple, caught as it is in legal wrangles.

But the temple authorities at Puri are determined not to let the statue suffer any further indignities, so they have filed a petition before the Supreme Court asking for the case to be transferred to Puri. Even if that happens, there are many legal hurdles left for the state Government to surmount.

Until the court announces its verdict, Garuda has been ordered to be kept within the precincts of the famous Jagannath temple, just three kilometres down the road from the Sri Gundicha temple. During the renowned annual rath festival at Jagannath, Garuda's absence had been badly felt, for his role in the ceremony is crucial. Once the three deities inside Jagannath have been carried to the Sri Gundicha temple, Garuda's role is to act as sentry during their one-week stay.

Although the statue is still waiting to be reinstalled to its rightful place, the people of Puri have heaved a collective sigh of relief that it's finally back. Their euphoria stems from a mixture of civic pride, religious devotion and self-interest. After its theft, a replica of Garuda was made, installed and worshipped every day. But there's been a nagging suspicion in the minds of the faithful that the replica has a somewhat malignant aspect. A spate of mishaps—the collapse of a couple of blocks from the top of the Jagannath temple and the embarrassing breakdown of the rath during this year's festival—have all been blamed on the replica.

But it won't just be a simple case of restoring the adored and much-missed original and discarding the suspect replica. Now that the legal niceties of ownership have been resolved, the statue has become the object of an equally unseemly theological wrangle.

In one camp are disciples who say that once a replica has been installed and worshipped, it cannot be discarded. In another are those who believe the original Garuda has been defiled as a result of its experiences in store-rooms and at the hands of the CBI. And in the middle are those who've never quite liked the look of the replica and want it removed before it does any more damage.

—RUBEN BANERJEE

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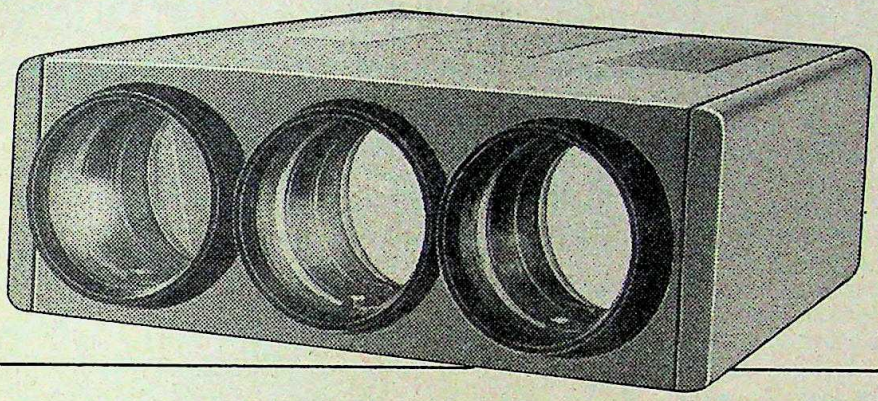
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CHEEMA OKERIE

Stunning Striker

Nigerian star infuses new life into Indian soccer

FOR Indian football on the look-out for a colossus and a crowd-puller, he was a godsend. He came from Nigeria to take a degree in commerce and was playing in a tournament in Visakhapatnam where he was studying when word got around. Soon after, he was in Calcutta, the centre for the top footballers of the country. And now, five years later, Cheema Okerie, 28, is arguably the only superstar Indian football can boast of.

Since Cheema appeared on the scene, Indian football has not been the same. A new rhythm, a new energy, seems to have been infused into the game. He plays soccer the way few Indian players do. Using his phenomenal muscle power, he carries the ball on the feet, and with utter disdain for the defensive wall put up by his opponents he boots a turf-scorcher. Often the ball ends up dangling in the net. Or he has the goalkeeper flying into the air hoping to divert the ball from its threatening trajectory. Even if the ball goes wide or above the goal post it sends a crescendo of incredulous aahs round the stadium. Cheema is on everyone's lips.

"I don't think I have improved much after beginning to play in India," he says sitting in the gallery of Delhi's Ambedkar Stadium his dark glasses and black T-shirt making him look more indomitable than he is. He is not too sure whether this is because he cannot find players who can match his style of play. But he thinks that improving his stamina will help him pull his game up many rungs. Coming from a player who is seen as the epitome of strength and stamina it shows how determined he is—the quality of a true professional. Says he: "I want to improve my stamina so that I can play up and down. That's the way I like to play."

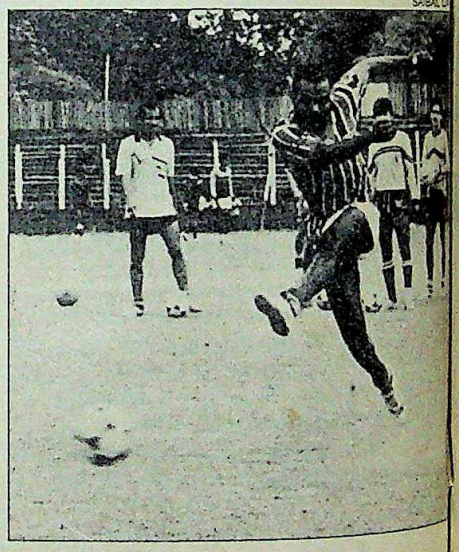
The unconventional way he plays tends to create havoc among defenders. The strategy that coaches often apply is to close mark him and to disturb his rhythm. "I would ask the player nearest to him and not just any single player to close mark him as he moves all around," says T.P. Chatunni, who has moulded the best defence in the country in his team Kerala Police.

But no fixed pattern of marking can contain Cheema for long. He pulls back even beyond the half line and picks up loose balls to storm in. And with his strong build he manages to manoeuvre to position himself for crosses from the flanks. His headers are no less powerful and his devastating thrust and quick turn of speed are thrilling.

It is this quality that makes him the score in gruelling tournaments like the Calcutta league. In 1985 when he was first picked up by Mohammedan Sporting he scored 16 out of the 33 goals the

Cheema has immense strength and shooting power and along with Kuljit forms a devastating pair.

SAIBAL DA



Cheema practising in Calcutta (right); and attacking in the DCM meet: robust football

SHARAD SAXENA

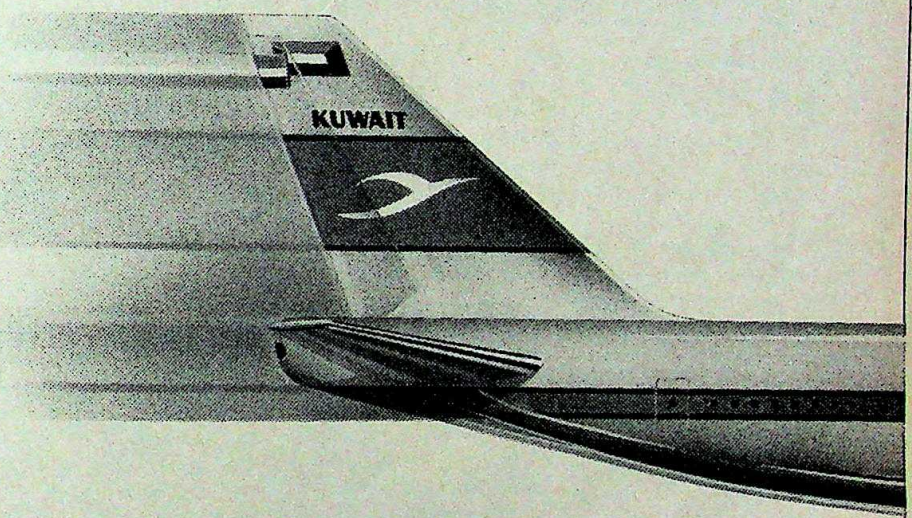
team scored in 2 matches. The next year he scored five goals in 1 matches. In 1987, when East Bengal bought him he scored 26 goals in 2 matches out of the 3 scored by his team. After missing out much football in 1988 he returned in 1989 to score 17 goals out of the 57 scored by East Bengal. This year he again topscored in the league with nine goals.

The problem with him however is that he is a temperamental and will get frustrated if his moves are stymied too often and ends up getting cards

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suspensions. And since he moves into the half-line, often he tends to spoil the rhythm of the veteran half-line of Sudeep Chatterjee and Kishanu Dey. And the wingers in an effort to find him often miss other openly placed players. "Cheema spoils much of East Bengal's moves. He tends to play too much for applause instead of having the team's fortunes in mind," says former international and coach, Ranjit Thapa.

But that may come from his being a natural, unsullied by textbook notations on how to trap, move, dribble or shoot. A style acquired by "playing for fun ever since I was six years old". That type of football is what Cheema does not find in India. "In India everyone plays cricket for fun," he chuckles. And thanks to him Nigerians are becoming much sought after in the domestic circuit. Mohammedan Sporting alone has three of them this year.

EAST Bengal's duo of strikers, Cheema and Kuljit Singh, are the most devastating pair seen for a long time in Indian stadiums. Kuljit himself doesn't feel too overawed by Cheema's presence and thinks that stamina and power are Cheema's mainstay. Says he: "There are other players here with as much skill."

The Kuljit-Cheema style is in contrast to that of the other deadly pair on show: Vijayan and Pappachan of Kerala Police, considered one of the best teams today. Though Pappachan usually plays on the flanks he often moves in by sheer ball control, pushes the ball to Vijayan who in a flash back-heels it past astounded defenders to Pappachan who has cut through in a classic show of the give-and-go tactic.

If Cheema had his say he would have liked Kuljit, Vijayan, Mohun Bagan's Sisir Ghosh or Mohammedan Sporting's Nigerian forward Chibuzor in the forward line with him.

Whether Cheema is of true international calibre is debatable. Many feel that he stands out more because of the mediocre company that he plays in and if he was all that valuable he would not have been wasting his time in the maidans around Red Road. But when a bomb from his feet explodes such scepticism is forgotten. Then it is all hushed whispers and hurrahs.

—BINOO K. JOHN

CALCUTTA FOOTBALL

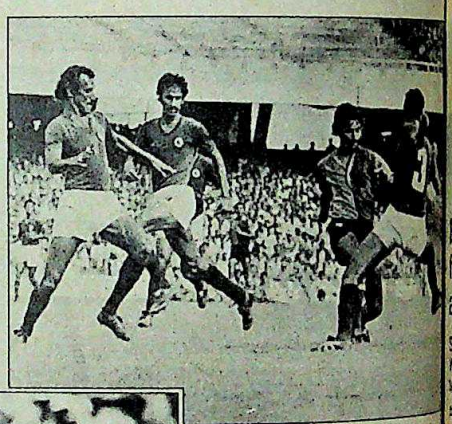
Sudden Slide

WHEN the semi-final line-up of the prestigious DCM International Football Tournament in Delhi last fortnight showed only one Calcutta big club it was yet another indication of the decline of Calcutta football which for years has been synonymous with the game in the country. For some time now the Calcutta giants—Mohun Bagan, East Bengal and Mohammedan Sporting—have been showing unmistakable signs of deterioration. In the Federation Cup early this year in Trichur none of these three clubs figured in the finals. A bright spot however, was Sporting's entry into the Nehru Cup semis.

The much-flaunted Mecca of Indian soccer, it seems, is turning out to be a graveyard for the game. Not a single new young player of class has emerged from the maidans in the last five years. In fact, five of the top 10 transfer-money earners of 1985 are still the most sought after players in Calcutta. Defender Subrata Bhattacharya of Mohun Bagan retired this year after playing 17 years in the league and there are are few to replace him. About Rs 60 lakh was spent by these clubs on buying up players this year.

If in the rest of the country, lack of funds is the problem, in Calcutta it is excess of money that is paradoxically hampering its evolution. For the businessmen who fund the clubs "the expenditure is part of business promotion and a way to get contacts," says a Mohun Bagan official.

The players' lives revolve not around notching a win but negotiating transfer fees. Once the tense negotiation and hide and seek games with club officials spread over two months are over, it is time to prepare for the gruelling league matches. Each of the A division teams have to play about 25 matches in two months. Apart from that most of these players have to play for their office teams. Cheema Okerie who feels that a team should play only one or two matches a week cites this as the major reason for Calcutta clubs' decline.



PRADEEP MANDHANI



Calcutta league in 1985; and (left) East Bengal in the DCM meet: no talent

The rise of the Jamshedpur Tata Football Academy, which is now a top team of youngsters mostly from Calcutta trained just for three years by former superstar Mohammed Habib, exposes how flawed the Calcutta system has become. The few youngsters who sweat their way up the league hierarchy to the A division and catch the attention of the big clubs are either too overawed by the legendary players or wither in their shadows. For them, as for many other youngsters, the sprawling Calcutta maidans are turning out to be fallow training grounds.

—BINOO K. JOHN with UTTAM SENGUPTA

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Bullying Tactics

Hockey is far too important to be left to federation officials who cannot look beyond their next foreign junket and deride their players for cheap thrills. The system is so rotten that no one working in it can deliver.

AFTER the hockey final at the Beijing Asiad the Pakistani supporters, who outnumbered Indians 20 to one lined the passage between the stadium and the players' bus, waiting for their heroes. The Indians, heads bowed in disappointment but not in shame preferred to use a side exit, avoiding the crowds. But one man decided to walk the gauntlet of booing Pakistanis. Pargat Singh, India's captain, ace defender, and one-man-army loves a fight. Even when groggy with the combined effect of injury and 14 painkilling injections within 24 hours. "If only we had won today *phaji*, all the *rona-dhona* would have stopped. Now it will all come back," he said as he ducked into a subway.

His fears have been vindicated by his own team's manager and a senior team-mate in a fit of the crassest, self-serving amnesia. Left winger Thoiba Singh, who was a spectator through the entire tournament, leaving Indian attack hobbling on one leg, may have had reasons for personal bitterness. His own performance could well have marked the end of his own career and it is understandable if he, still hungering for India's captaincy, found scapegoats in Pargat and fellow forward Jagbir Singh, the only two players to have dazzled throughout. Manager Ghufran-e-Azam joining the tirade shows the bankruptcy to which the management of the national game has slid.

Ghufran charges Pargat with not having told him of his injury till the beginning of the match, Jagbir with letting mercurial Pakistani forward Shahbaz off the hook and breaking the rhythm of his own team through individualism and Pargat again, for monopolising penalty corner hits instead of letting Jagdev who had struck the first successfully, to take the rest. He is wrong on all three counts, besides being guilty of lying.

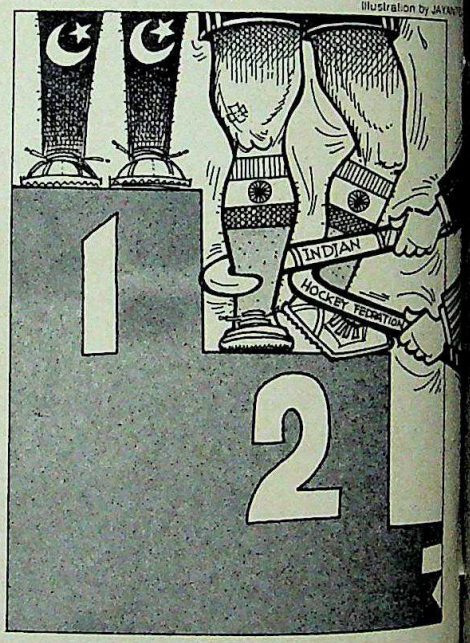
Anyone present in Beijing would confirm that every Indian journalist or contingent member interested in hockey knew of Pargat's injury. Even before the match Ghufran himself and coaches Jhaman Lal Sharma and Inam-ur Rahman were discussing it. For Ghufran to now turn around and say that he knew nothing about it is a lie preposterous by even the remarkably disgraceful standards of Indian sport officialdom. Even at the post-match press conference, coach Sharma's answer to why he had played Jagbir as a withdrawn forward was that it became necessary because of Pargat's injury.

If the charge against Pargat is a lie the condemnation of Jagbir betrays either poor eyesight or an abysmally poor knowledge of the game. All through the first half he was played virtually as a dogsbody, bringing up the rear, policing Shahbaz... not many in the world can do that—and e... lending shoulder to a struggling forward line. T... second half saw Jagbir being himself, juggling... weaving and feinting his way past Pakistani defence... and selflessly passing the ball to others. Thoiba... failed to trap the ball each time it was hit to him...

The man most incensed was Ghufran who w... fuming after the match. "Thoiba, this man, ... should have been retired years ago. I tell you, ... give a walking stick in anybody's hand, he will be ... better left-out," he said for the benefit of all and... sundry in the Indian camp. For him to now join... Thoiba's campaign shows he is just politicking.

Not long before the Asiad Pargat had led the... senior players' quest for a better deal and the Indian... Hockey Federation had retaliated by sacking the... entire lot. With the intervention of the sports... minister the players won. Now when they stood... defeated the IHF, or at least the faction which...

Illustration by JAYANTO



Ghufran represents, decided to hit back.

Indian hockey is too important to be left to... Ghufran-e-Azams or federation officials who can... not look beyond their next foreign junkets and... deride their own players for cheap thrills. India is... already reduced to the ignominy of a qualifying... tournament for the Barcelona Olympics. As the line-... up indicates qualifying will be no cakewalk and... unless planning begins now India may have to sit... out at Spain, for the first time in an Olympics since... 1928. The disease is almost malignant and surgery... has to be drastic. Hand the team over to a reputed... professional foreign coach-cum-manager, give him... a five-year contract with performance-linked bo... nuses, a young Indian coach understudy and pray... for some luck. This is no reflection on Jhaman Lal... Sharma who commands the respect and the affec... tion of the team. It is just that the system has become... so rotten that no one functioning within it can even... hope to deliver. Indian hockey needs a professional... firm and untainted foreign hand.

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MINIMISING RISKS OF NUCLEAR POWER TO MAXIMISE NETT BENEFITS.

Risks are part of our daily life. Occasional explosion of lpg gas cylinders, house collapse, explosion, industrial and automobile accidents, train collisions, air crashes and outbreak of chams are some instances. Yet, because of the benefits obtained, man has learnt to accept these risks, by taking safety precautions. In fact, the science of safety is to reduce risks to very low probabilities, since in real life zero risk situations do not exist. That's why, in every nuclear power plant, a maximum credible accident is calculated by designers and suitable engineering safeguards built in.

Risks at nuclear power plants are mainly due to radiation effects. It must, however, be emphasized at the outset, that ***a nuclear reactor is not an atom bomb;*** that the ***level of radiation is very low;*** and that ***radiation-induced cancers and genetic defects form a very small fraction of those occurring naturally.***

For safety purposes, the effects of radiation are classified into two types :

Probabilistic — affecting at random, not all but only a few of the persons exposed. Cancer induction and genetic abnormalities belong to this category. However, these are controlled by limiting the level of radiation and the number of persons exposed.

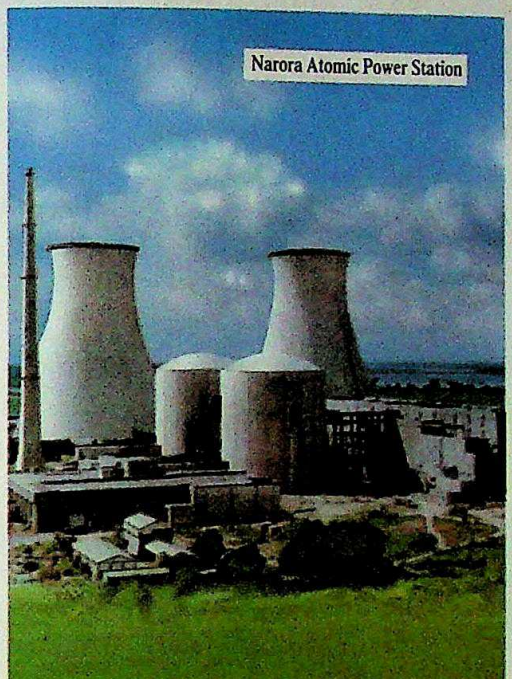
Deterministic — affecting every person exposed, provided the exposure exceeds threshold level. Skin erythema and eye cataract belong to this type and are controlled by limiting the exposures to below threshold level.

Safety objectives are to prevent "core-melt" accident due to uncontrolled power excursion or loss of coolant (LOCA). and to maintain successive, multiple, physical barriers to prevent fall-out of fission products in the public domain.

Global safety record of nuclear power plants.

Presently operating about 430 civilian nuclear power plants over the last three decades, there have been just two reactor accidents. One at Three Mile Island (TMI-2) in U.S.A., in March 1979 and the Chernobyl (Unit-4) in U.S.S.R., in April 1986. At TMI-2, it was a U.S.A. due to operating error, resulting in partial core-melt. There were no casualties or radioactive fall-out in the public domain, because of containment building. At Chernobyl, it was the uncontrolled power excursion caused again, through an operating error, that of bypassing safety devices. All thirty-one casualties were from the plant. Radioactive fission products had spread across national boundaries in Europe. Both the accidents were thoroughly investigated and the lessons learnt, conveyed to all 113 members of the IAEA. Except for these two cases, the overall safety record has been excellent.

But then are the benefits obtained from nuclear power generation? From 1956 to 1987, world nuclear power contribution has been about 17000 Terra-Watt-hours of electricity. This has saved over 4400 million tonnes of coal or 2600 million tonnes of oil. Although it may be insignificant in comparison to the coal and oil resources available, its main contribution has been in reducing pollution considerably (10000 million tonnes of carbon dioxide, 200 million tonnes of acid gases, poisonous heavy metals and carcinogenic benzpyrene). Worldwide, more than 10000 lives have been saved from accident avoidance and over 2.5 million non fatal cases of injuries averted, which would otherwise have been the detriment, had 12000 TWhrs been produced from coal.



Narora Atomic Power Station

Radiological Impact of Nuclear Power as compared to Medical & Natural Background Exposures.

Source	Present Annual Individual Dose (in millirem)		Collective Dose Commitments	
	Per Capita (World Population)	Typical (Exposed Individuals)	Million Man-rem	Equivalent years of background
Annual :			**Per Year of Practice**	
1. Natural Background	240	100-500	1100	1
2. Medical Exposure (Diagnostic)	40-100	10-1000	200-500	0.2-0.5
3. Occupational Exposure	0.2	50-500	1.0	0.001
4. Nuclear Power Production	0.02	0.1-10	0.1	0.0001
Single :			**Per Total Practice**	
a) All Test Explosions	1.0	1.0	500	0.5
b) Nuclear Accidents	—	—	60	0.06

Source: United Nations Scientific Committee on the effects of Atomic Radiation (UNSCEAR).

- Spontaneous annual incidence rate of cancer is about 600-800 per million population (0.06-0.08%). The contributing factors are tobacco 30%, food 33%, viral infection 10%, alcohol 4%, industrial occupation 4%, hereditary 2% and natural background radiation less than 0.5%.
- Spontaneous occurrence of inherited genetic diseases caused by mutations is about 10.7% in the population. Out of which, 7.6% is caused by environmental factors, smoking and food. And 0.1% is due to natural background radiation. Air pollution, viruses, alcohol and mutagenic chemicals also cause other genetic defects.
- Casualties at Chernobyl were thirty-one, as compared to 3000 in the Vaiont dam failure (1963) in Italy and another 3000 in the Morvi dam failure (1979) in India.

Indian experience and safety performance.

There have been no fatalities caused by radiation nor any significant occupational radiation injuries nor any detriment to the public or the environment at any of the Indian nuclear power plants, which have so far logged over 70 reactor-years. The reports of the TMI-2 and Chernobyl accidents were thoroughly reviewed and corrective measures incorporated in the design and operating procedures, wherever necessary. Constant alertness and vigilance to safeguard safety have long been pre-requisites of the safety culture, so essential, in operating nuclear power plants.

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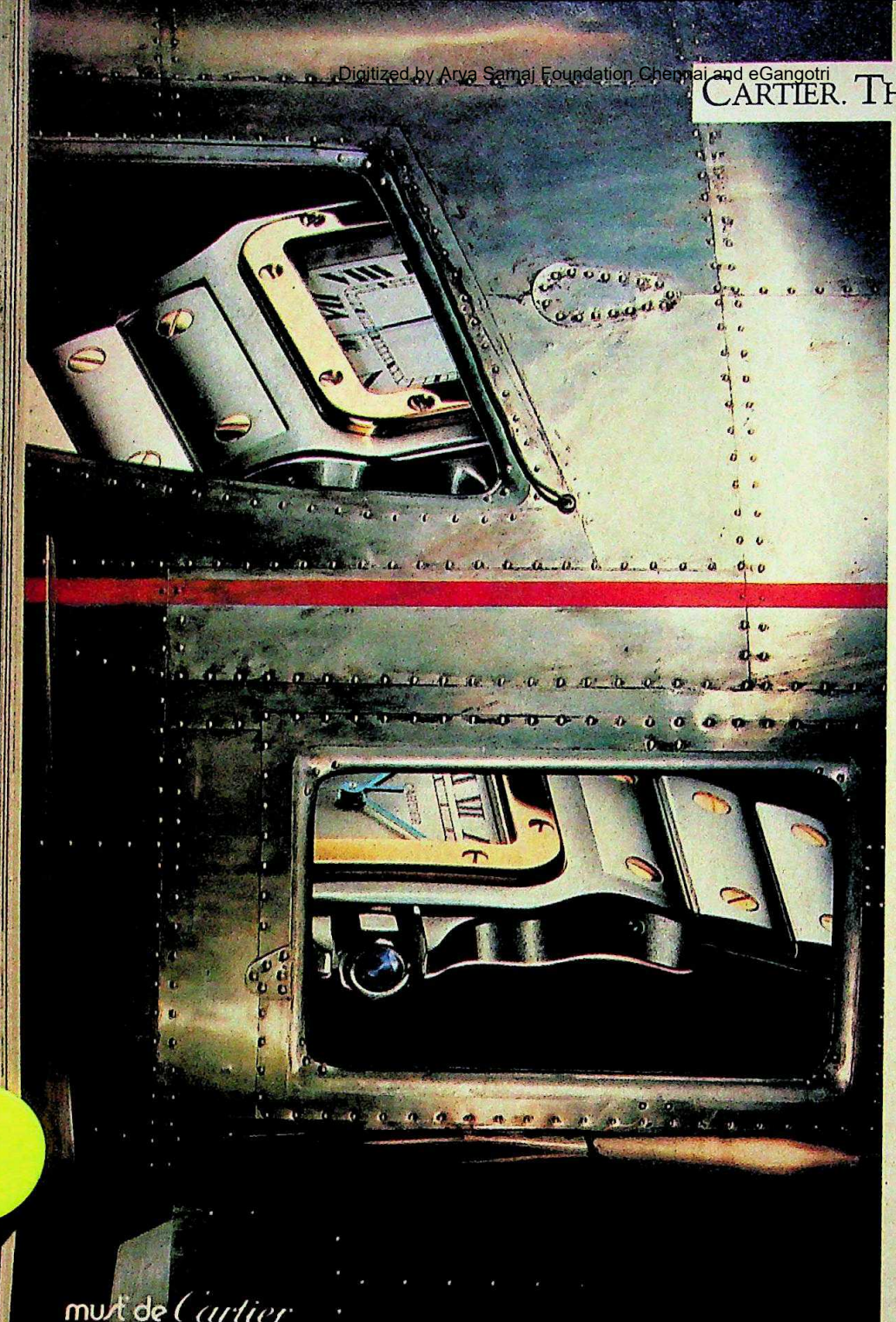
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FOTO FREQUENCY



MIN BAJRACHARYA

NEPAL

Constitutional Watershed

Promulgation ushers sweeping changes



King Birendra (top); and Ganesh Man Singh (centre) with wife

In Nepal, constitutions are generally known by the year they are promulgated. So, when on Friday, November 9, King Birendra Bir Bikram Shah proclaimed the Himalayan kingdom's fourth Constitution in three decades, it promptly came to be known as the Constitution of 1990. Despite the fact by Nepali Congress leaders that at least 'essentials' were more important than details, the possibility of another Constitution in the near future could not be ruled out.

The proclamation itself was preceded by weeks of nerve-tingling drama. The palace circulated a draft constitution of its own, provoking pro-democracy demonstrations. The army top brass grimly tried to retain sovereignty for the King while the Cabinet—discord between the Nepali Congress and the United Left Front—tried its utmost to find a way out. In the end, November 9 became the landmark. A confrontation between the palace and the Cabinet had been averted. The King was clearly down, but not out. In fact, some observers felt that King Birendra had had his way.

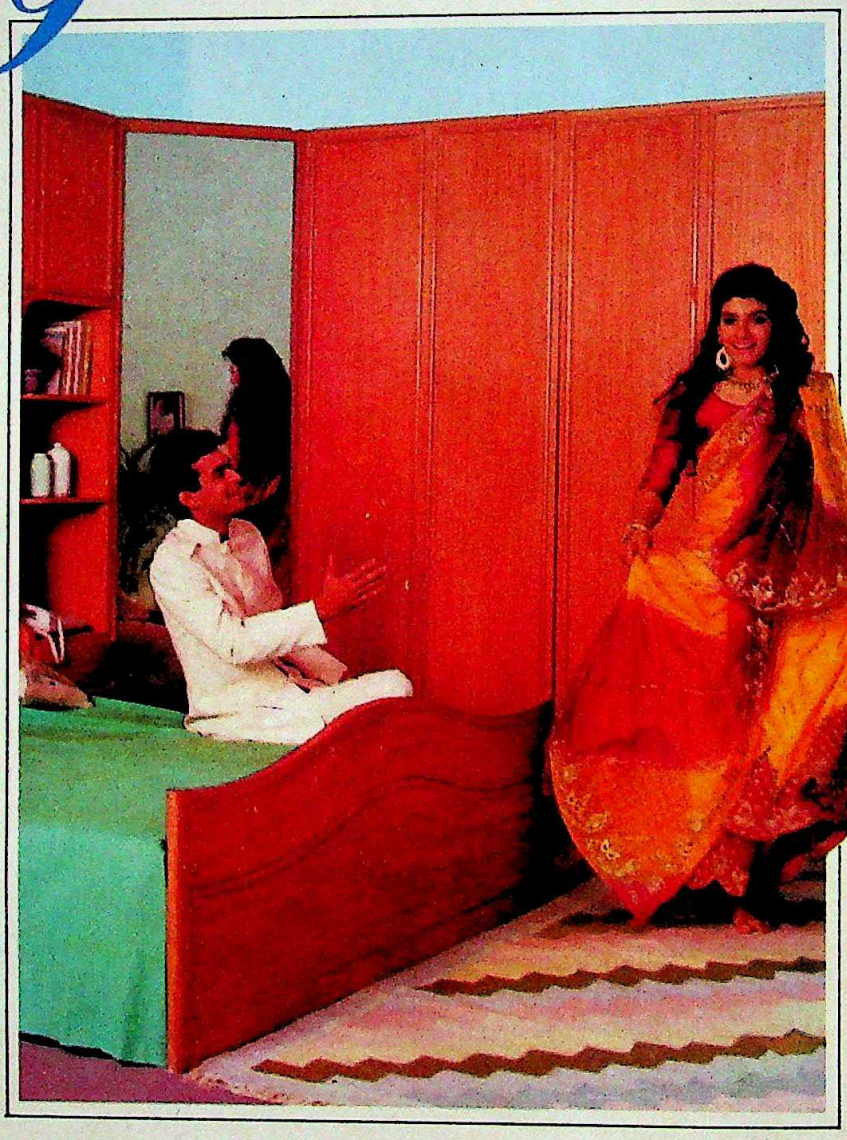
It was champagne time at Narayanhiti Palace soon after King Birendra proclaimed the Constitution. For a brief ceremony, exclusively for a few invitees, the Throne Room was thrown open—for the first time to the commoners. And the King accepted the presence of Mrs Sahana Pradhan, president of the United Left Front, in the Throne Room, so far out of bounds for women including the Queen. Moreover, the royal couple mingled among their guests at the reception which followed. Till recently, even prime ministers were not allowed to look at the royal couple eye to eye.

While the King entertained his guests with the choicest wine and had a fireworks display within the palace, the mood in Kathmandu was sombre. The euphoria that marked the pro-democracy movement was noticeably absent. And tension was palpable despite celebrations by Nepali Congress workers who observed the day as 'Mukti Divas'. Within hours of the promulgation, grim-looking youth began collecting in street corners and at various offices of the communist parties. Said Madhav Nepal of the CP (M-L): "They are angry because in the proclamation the King said that he was using powers inherent in him." The radical Left took out black flags and shouted slogans to abrogate the 'Black Constitution'. Parts of Kathmandu once again observed a black-out in

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protest, as they had done the previous evening, which was the birthday of Queen Ajsharya Rajyalakshmi.

Much misgiving arose due to continued distrust of the royalty. Even Ganesh Man Singh, leader of the Nepali Congress quipped: "Barring the King, even the palace dog is against democracy." The fears were compounded by the King's firm refusal to give up control of the armed forces.

AND though Man Singh said that they "couldn't have expected a better Constitution", many were still sore. Those wanting to see Nepal a 'secular' country were disappointed to find the Cabinet okaying the retention of the words 'Hindu Kingdom' in the preamble. Those who wanted the national anthem—more an anthem to the King, to be changed were disappointed. Most people felt that the Crown had been left with far too many powers.

Undoubtedly, the most dismayed were the Left parties. They have been advocating an end to monarchy and in the Constitution they see the final seal to the nexus between the King and the Nepali Congress. There are indications that the Nepali Congress would contest on its own and leave the Left to form the Opposition. Said a Nepali Congress leader tongue-in-cheek: "A vibrant democracy needs a strong opposition; and if we contest the election together, who will be in the Opposition?" The certainty of the split also ensures that the Constitution of 1990 will be a major election issue.

—UTTAM SENGUPTA in Kathmandu

MIN BAJRACHARYA



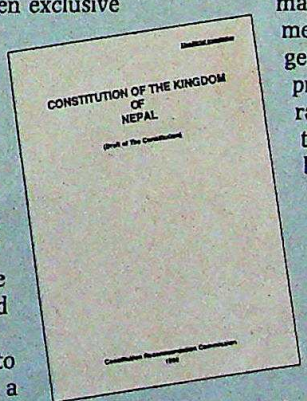
Nepali Congress supporters celebrating the declaration of the new Constitution

THE CONSTITUTION

Timely Tract

DESPITE visible loopholes, the Constitution of 1990 marks a watershed in Nepal's political history. For the first time a multi-party system has been guaranteed by the Constitution; sovereignty has been transferred from the Crown to the people, capital punishment and pre-censorship abolished, detention without reference to courts specifically prohibited, the King's emergency powers diluted and the advice of the Cabinet made binding on him.

But, King Birendra wrested several concessions for the palace. Apart from retaining control over the army, he also ensured that the definition of the royal family was unchanged. The Constitution Recommendation Commission had defined the royal family as comprising the King, Queen, their children and the Queen Mother. The intention was to deny royal privileges to relatives of the King. The communist parties had, in fact, begun a campaign asking relatives of royalty to choose between royalty and the status of businessmen. Said a leftist: "It is farcical to allow privileges to people who have been amassing wealth through business and industry." As the property and income of the royal family are exempt from taxes, their privileges are substantial. The King, however, has been given exclusive power to define the royal family and deal with succession.



In other semantic changes the palace also persuaded the Cabinet to delete all references to the 'historic people's movement' and replace it with 'the recently concluded people's movement'.

But the palace failed to have Nepal declared a Zone of Peace, a move opposed by India. Explained an Indian diplomat: "The proposal includes provisions that there would be no concerted media campaigns against Nepal and that asylum would not be given to terrorists. Now, 115 western countries endorsed it as neither Nepal nor they are bothered about what is written in their media." No reference has been made to the proposal in the final draft and that is considered a defeat for the royalists.

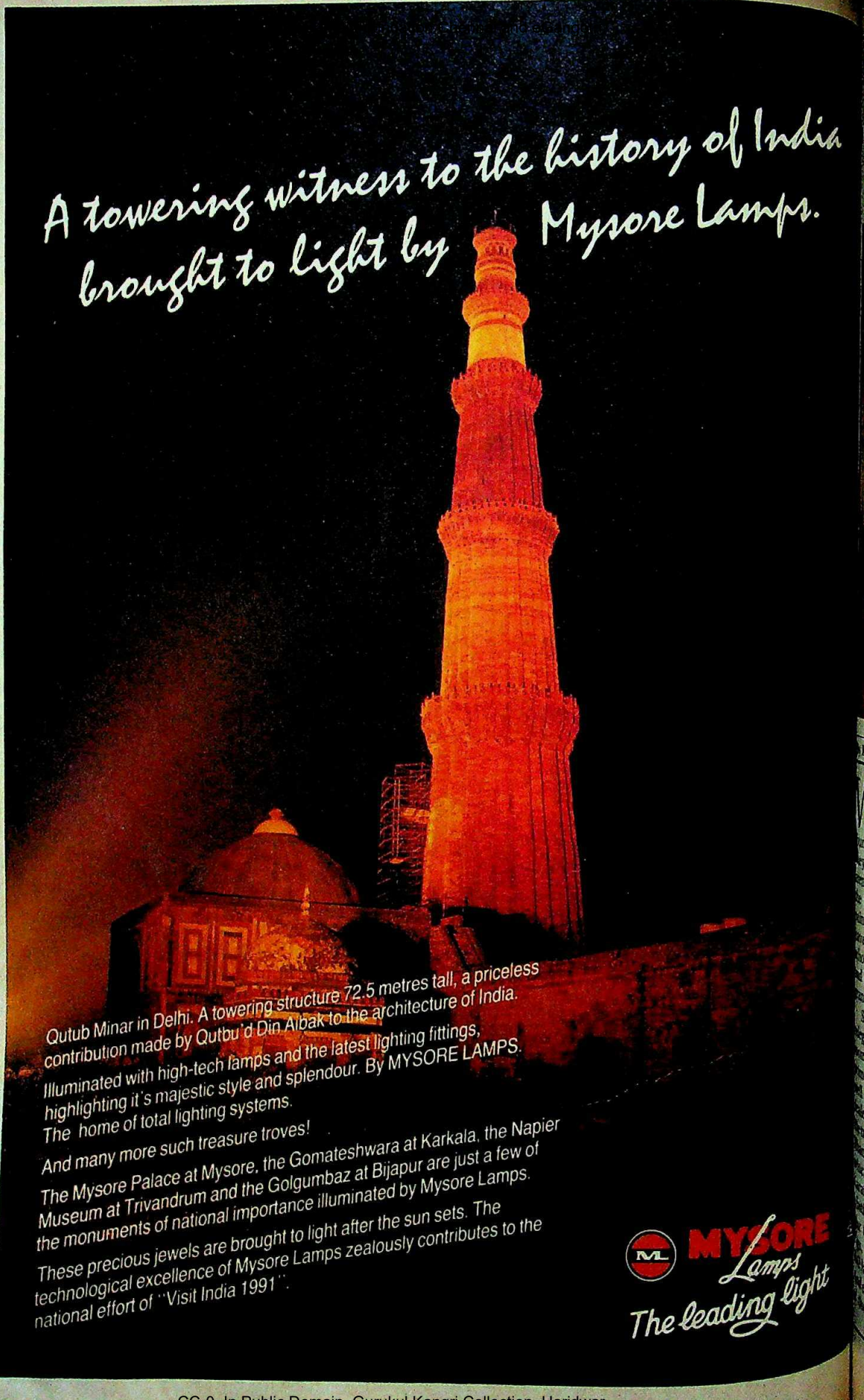
Sovereignty has now been transferred to the people.

Similarly the palace wanted all treaties to be endorsed by a two-third majority in Parliament, far more stringent than the Cabinet proposal: namely, ratification by two-thirds of the members present and voting. This was also believed to be directed towards India but again the Cabinet refused to endorse the plea by the palace.

"This may not be the best document," agreed Prime Minister K.P. Bhattarai, "but there are provisions to amend it." However, the Nepali Congress and United Left Front have kept the first part of their promise as Nepal waits for elections.

—UTTAM SENGUPTA

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TANJORE PAINTINGS

Remarkable Revival

Suddenly, the traditional school is immensely popular

Photograph by K.V. ANAND

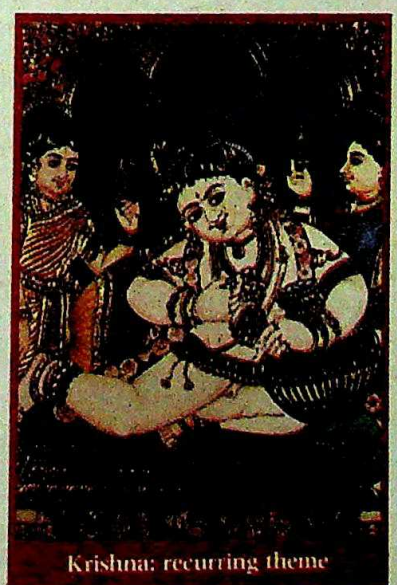


An exhibition of original masterworks in Madras: eye-catching mix of religious grandeur and earthy sensuality

KAVITHA SHETTY

WHAT do Sonia Gandhi, Jaya Bachchan and Romi Kapil Dev have in common? A newfound love of Tanjore paintings which ...er are collecting assiduously. They ...n't the only ones to be charmed by ...e traditional south Indian style of ...intings. The whole art mart seems to ...e woken up to the opulent Tanjore ...ool characterised by iconic themes ...d an eye-catching mix of religious ...andeur and earthy sensuality.

Suddenly old Tanjore paintings, ...egated till the other day to prayer ...oms and attics, have begun to find a ...ce place in plush drawing-rooms as ...ll as corporate offices. In Madras ...lers have mushroomed, who scour ...e traditional centres further south—...anjavur (the temple town after ...ich the style is named), Trichy and ...udukudi—for originals. Frequent ex...sitions (read sales) are held in the ...metros where the antique paint...s priced between Rs 25,000 and ...lakh, are snapped up by collectors. ...even as supply falls woefully short ...the demand, imitations are being churned out. And lapped up.



Krishna: recurring theme

The Tanjore school flourished in Tamil Nadu in the 18th and 19th centuries under the patronage of the Nayaka and Maratha kings. Its decline came in the early 20th century when shedding the shackles of slavery became the all-consuming passion.

As with most old Indian art, the Tanjore paintings too were mainly used for worship. But as the sacred gave way to the secular, they were put away, to mildew silently in dark corners. An estimated five thousand such works exist. Accumulating layer upon layer of dust and negligence in *puja* rooms, *bhajan mandapams* and *mutts*, they are a veritable treasure—the most modest estimate would put their value at Rs 100 crore.

But unfortunately many of the old Tanjore paintings are falling apart: paint peeling off and frames crumbling. Some dealers spruce them up before marketing them. But genuine collectors would rather buy a Tanjore painting on an as-is-where-is basis.

One of the half a dozen Tanjore dealers in Madras is M. Deendayal whose Aparna Art Gallery sells more than 200 paintings in a year. Says he: "The big buyers are up north in Delhi and Bombay. In the south people have taken these paintings for granted."

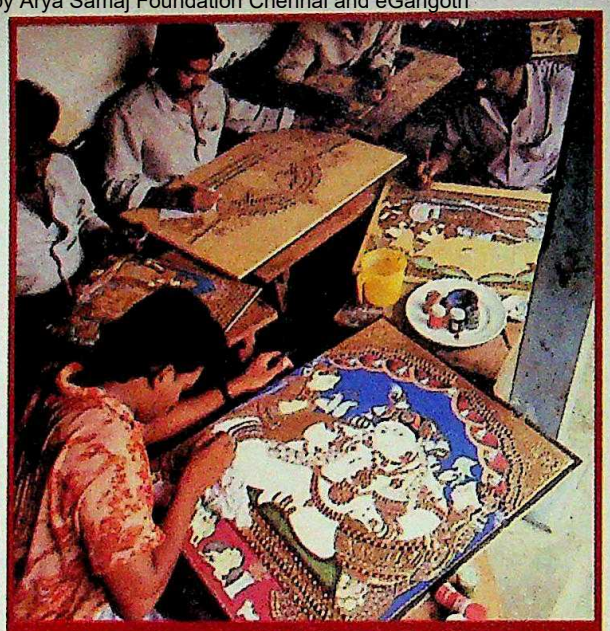
As awareness about the worth of Tanjore art percolates down, many households are approaching the dealers directly with a painting to sell.

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But usually dealers have to rely on local procurers in interior Tamil Nadu, who in turn buy up the new favourites from impoverished households for a pittance, but by the time it passes through many hands and reaches the final buyer the price would have increased manifold. One class of buyers which does not mind the stiff rates is the expatriate Indians.

The big money for the dealers comes from peddling 'new' Tanjore paintings. Says Ramachandra Raju of Indian Crafts: "On an old Tanjore I can only hope to make 15-20 per cent profit but on a new painting it's a clean 50 per cent." Raju set up business in 1952 but opened the gallery on Mount Road just four years ago. Today he sells Rs 50,000 worth of paintings in an average month. The money pours in from selling imitations, while the prestige comes from selling originals to the likes of Sonia Gandhi as well as to consulates, five-star hotels and top companies.



Students make profitable replicas in the Tanjore style

Says Raju about the growing craze for imitations: "People come into my gallery and ask for 'two butter Krishnas'—just like that." Indeed, the increase in demand has spawned feverish activity and numerous schools offering to teach art have sprung up. While some take to painting in their time, there are housewives, college students and professionals who have begun to adopt it as an avocation. Dr Subbalakshmi, a neurologist: "It helps me keep in touch with the arts and is a paying proposition."

Of course, the new Tanjore paintings can hardly hope to approximate the originals. Traditionally the painting was done on cloth pasted on wood. It was invariably studded with precious stones and gilded with 24 carat gold, which added to its value. A contemporary painter has to perforce do with poster colours instead of vegetable dyes, instead of gold, and glass bits instead of rare and precious stones.

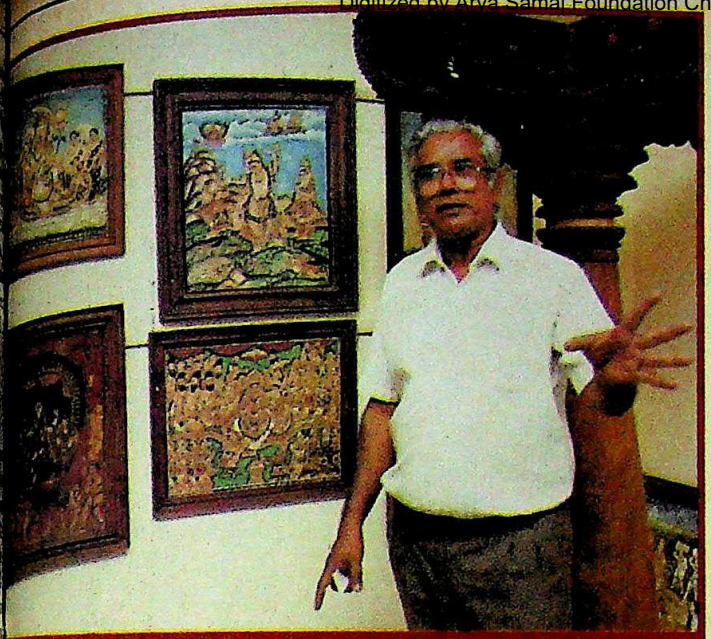
Meena Muthiah, who runs a Tanjore painting school in Madras, tries to stick to gold and the traditional as much as possible. But most of

IN THE STILLNESS OF THE MORNING EVERYTHING WAITS



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M. Deendayal of the Aparna Art Gallery in Madras: raking it in

...it and the nouveau riche buyer ...n't even insist. Remarks a dismayed ...hah: "People come to exhibitions ...g for a Tanjore painting for Rs 200. ...There are dealers who will conjure it ...on." Inevitably, what pass for new Tanjores are often garish efforts, replete with confetti, coloured beads and aluminium foil.

Even thematic changes are being experimented with. And there are those who defend such moves. Says Srinivasulu, head of the painting department at Kalakshetra, a reputed classical arts institution in Madras, who is trying to introduce secular themes and elements of folk art into the iconic Tanjore style: "People want the same old Krishnas and Ramas but contemporary artists will incorporate new themes and buyers should be interested."

Whether the booming trade in Tanjores is symptomatic of a genuine revival, or is just another passing fad, part of the frippery ethnic mania afflicting the fashionable, is still uncertain. In fact, the Tanjore school was rediscovered only as recently as the Festival of India in the USSR. The Tanjore exhibits were greatly appreciated for their striking resemblance to the Russian icons found in old churches.

Then, when enquiries started trickling in, dealers got into the act and were quick to realise that Tanjore paintings are going to be the new rage. And rightly too. It has now added a new dimension and genre to the burgeoning art market in India.

It's possible that the boom may blow over in the near future, but while the paintings sell, the Tanjore dealers—and the copycats—will continue to rake in the quick bucks.



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KAMALAHASAN

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The Versatile Virtuoso

Superstar actor touches new peaks with quadruple role

KAMALAHASAN'S thirst for the innovative seems to brook no quenching. After the silence of *Pushpak Viman*, the dwarfdom of *Appu Raja*, the histrionics of *Nayakan*, and the sensitivity of *Sadma*, the star-actor has with characteristic elan scaled one more peak: playing four roles in his latest hit *Michael Madana Kama Rajan*. With the film playing to full houses in Tamil Nadu since Diwali—and expected to do at least a 100 days—Kamalahasan has reaffirmed himself as the star who can sell commercially as well as touch thespian peaks, with a combination of talent, application and the need for the zany.

Despite the success at the box-office, the 38-year-old actor with a kaleidoscope of a face has a real problem: the audience today expects something new from him each time. A silent movie *(Pushpak Viman)*; a raging bull of a mafia don *(Nayakan)*; a convincing dwarf and multiple roles (three roles in *Apoorva Sahodarakal*: the dwarf, his brother and their father).

Undaunted, the tiny juggernaut has to keep going. Already, Kamalahasan is like a champion who's boxed his way to the top and having knocked off his rivals enroute, has nobody left to box with. Except himself and his punching bag after nearly 155 films and the three decades of cinema he's just completed: his first, *Kalathoor Kannamma*, was released in 1960.

There's no doubt that Kamal is an actor's actor. Even arch rival Rajnikanth, the current matinee idol of Tamil cinema, concedes defeat: "Acting is a part of my life, but with Kamalahasan it is his life. In north India there is Amitabh Bachchan; in the south there is only Kamalahasan."

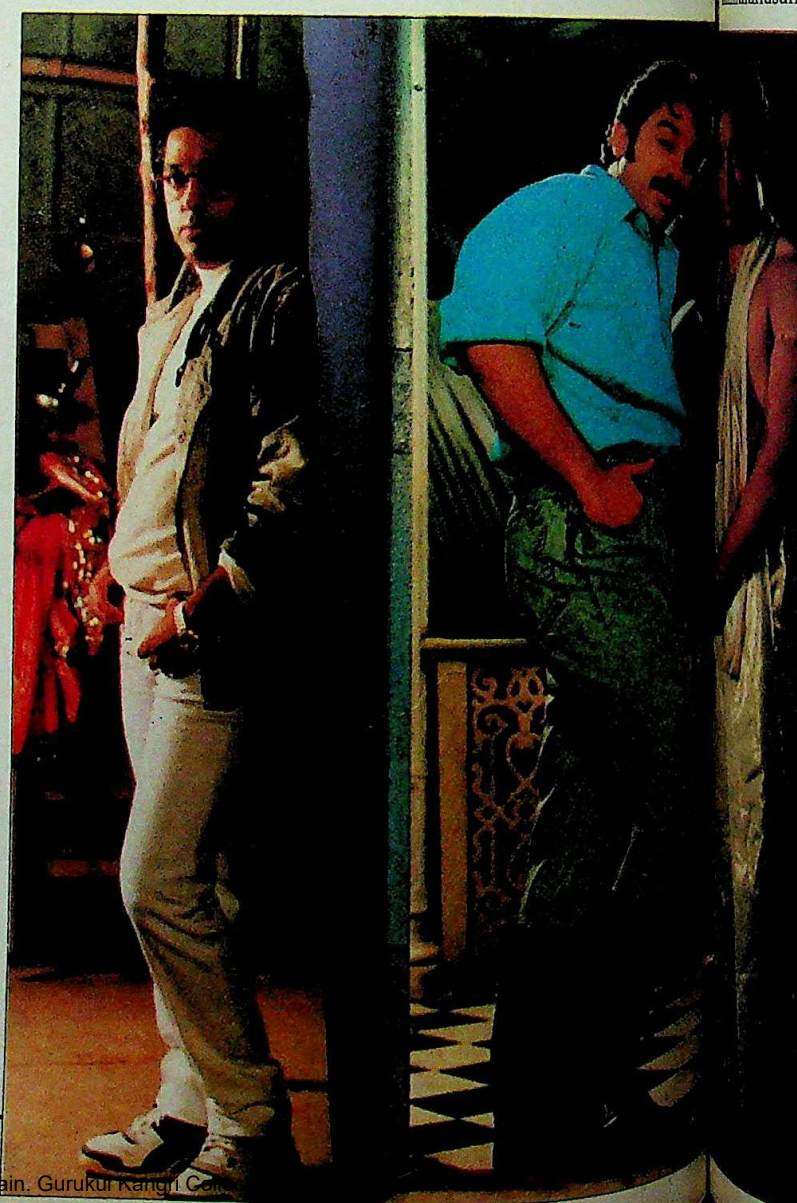
Kamal has reached the pinnacle of acting in Tamil cinema, many would even say Indian cinema, particularly after his stunningly powerful performance in *Nayakan*—the unhappy detour into Hindi cinema notwithstanding. But where does he go from here? It's an open secret in the Tamil film industry that Kamal has been a backseat director for a few years. "Many see him as intruding into others' roles," says Singeethan Srinivas Rao, who directed *Pushpak*, *Apoorva* and *Michael Madana*. "But it's only a sign of his involvement."

And Kamal is more than ready to take up the director's baton. Says he: "I came into the film industry to direct." Perhaps that is why, since *Nayakan*, he has slowed down. "I concentrate on one film at a time." Previously, he careened from one commercial film to another, leading even an unabashed admirer like director Balu Mahendra to say: "For one worthwhile film, we have to sit through 10 rubbish Kamalahasan films."

But, whatever the film, this Robert De Niro of Indian cinema is willing to bend backwards for it. He will put on weight, lose weight, go bald, learn languages, even ventriloquism. For instance, in K. Viswanath's *Sagara Sangamam* his inspired Bhara... had the professional dancer...

At the root of this almost... fervour is Kamalahasan's drive... best. Says Balachander: "All ... done, he is very selfish. He even... outdo the director. He has to... best." In other words, a scene st... fact, he can even stand his own... Sridevi as he did in Mahendra'... *ram Pirai* (*Sadma* is the Hindi ve... the same director). "A lesse... would have gone to pieces with h... says Balu Mahendra. And that... is why Kamal's father says proud... will get an Oscar."

Decidedly, Kamal is a direct... light. He can shed his personal... transform himself into a char... easily as Naseeruddin Shah. "Ka... no definite image, a director c... him in any role," says Balacha...



The many faces of Kamalaha... master of impersonation

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perhaps it's this vary quality which
ve him a trifle cold. Nobody knows
eal Kamal. "Kamalji is not very
of small talk or party talk," says
, the actress and the mother of
daughters. She believes that the
that both of them were child stars
nts for their need for privacy. "I
ow we have been so exposed that
e is nothing people don't know
t us."

mewhat of a loner in the bustling
of Madras filmdom, Kamal's true
d and friends are perhaps up there
e silver screen. "People bring real-
to cinema, but Kamal brought
a into reality," says former wife
"He tends to live cinema."

fe may not be an extension of
ma for Kamal; but cinema appears
the very oxygen he breathes. A
ure of celluloid, the true Kamala-
n may only be glimpsed from his
. And even then it may not be the
Kamalahasan. —MADHU JAIN

INTERVIEW

"Humour is serious business"

THERE is something elf-like about Kamalahasan. His face breaks into a myriad expressions with the ease of a Kathakali maestro going through the nine rasas. He spoke to Special Correspondent MADHU JAIN *even though he was busy working on his new film* Michael Madana Kama Rajan.

On tall and short men:

I suppose I do have something about not being tall. Perhaps that's why my idols are short: Sivaji Ganesan, Charlie Chaplin, Brando, Sanjeev Kumar. In *Apoorva Sahodarkal* I could have used the same technique to become taller. I could have played 'The Incredible Hulk'. But I didn't.

On his looks:

I am not purely Aryan. I have a lot of Mohenjo Daro in me. Look at these lips, the nose perhaps it is the perfect Dravidian-Aryan mix.

On his foray into Hindi films:

I made mistakes. I was trigger happy.

On comedy:

I love comedy. Humour is a very serious business, as is comedy. What an artiste fears most is to be taken for a clown off-screen.

On religion:

It is very personal, but I certainly would not waste time ascertaining its non-existence. Religion, though, does keep people off the pyschiatric couches.

On his family:

Mine was never a typical Mylapore family. My father is very loving but there was a certain formality. I couldn't jump on his back as my daughter Shruti does with me.

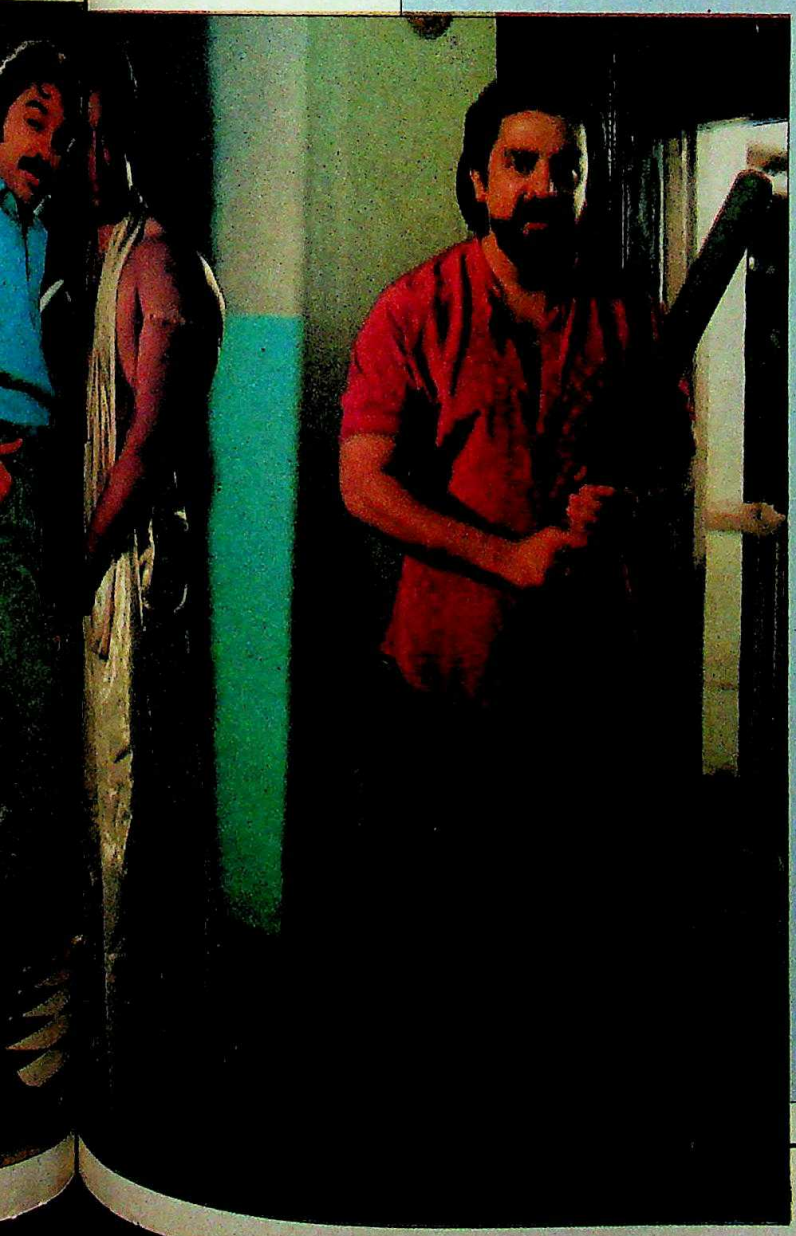
My father was 48 when I was born so I was a pampered child. He is also a very independent man. Do you know that the shops outside the house were bought by him because he thought that if I could not make it in life, if I were to become a bum, I could live off those shops? But I am proud to say that I bought the house and the shops.

Other actors:

As far as Indian actors go, I have been telling people for the last 15 years that Amrish Puri is really hero material. He is the answer to the Stallones, Bronsons and Eastwoods. He should play the lead role with Magambos on the side. Amitabh Bachchan has the same qualities as Belmondo or Christopher Lambert in the new Tarzan. These actors have a neanderthal look.

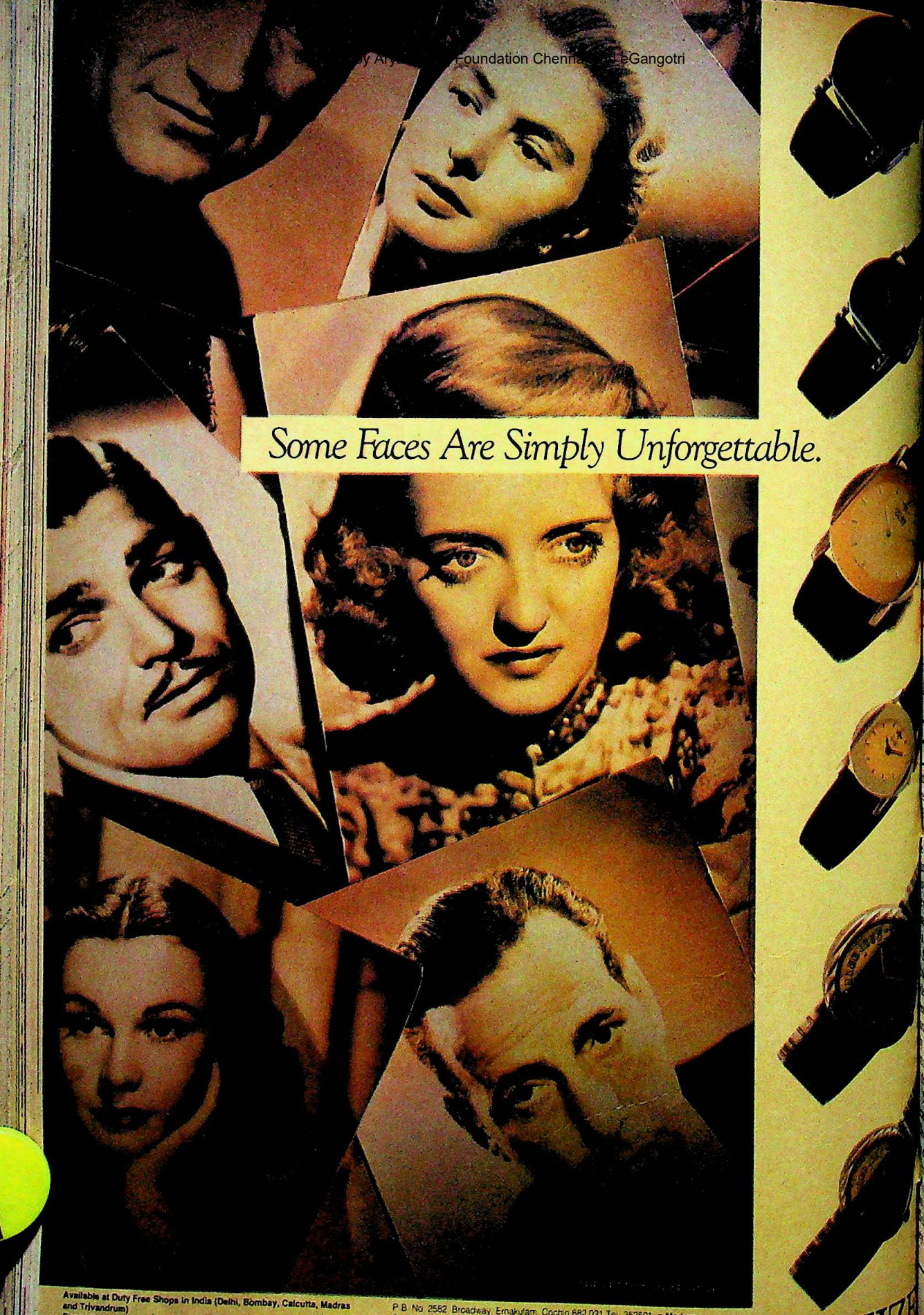
On *Apoorva Sahodarakal*:

I can't tell you how I did it. It is like asking a magician how he does his card tricks. I got the idea while doing *Sagar*. I asked Rameshji (Sippy) why not use a dwarf as a mirror image of the hero's conscience. Amitabh Bachchan gets drunk and pours out his woes to god. My character sees himself as a dwarf—that's how neglected he is and feels. So I thought, I will play the dwarf.



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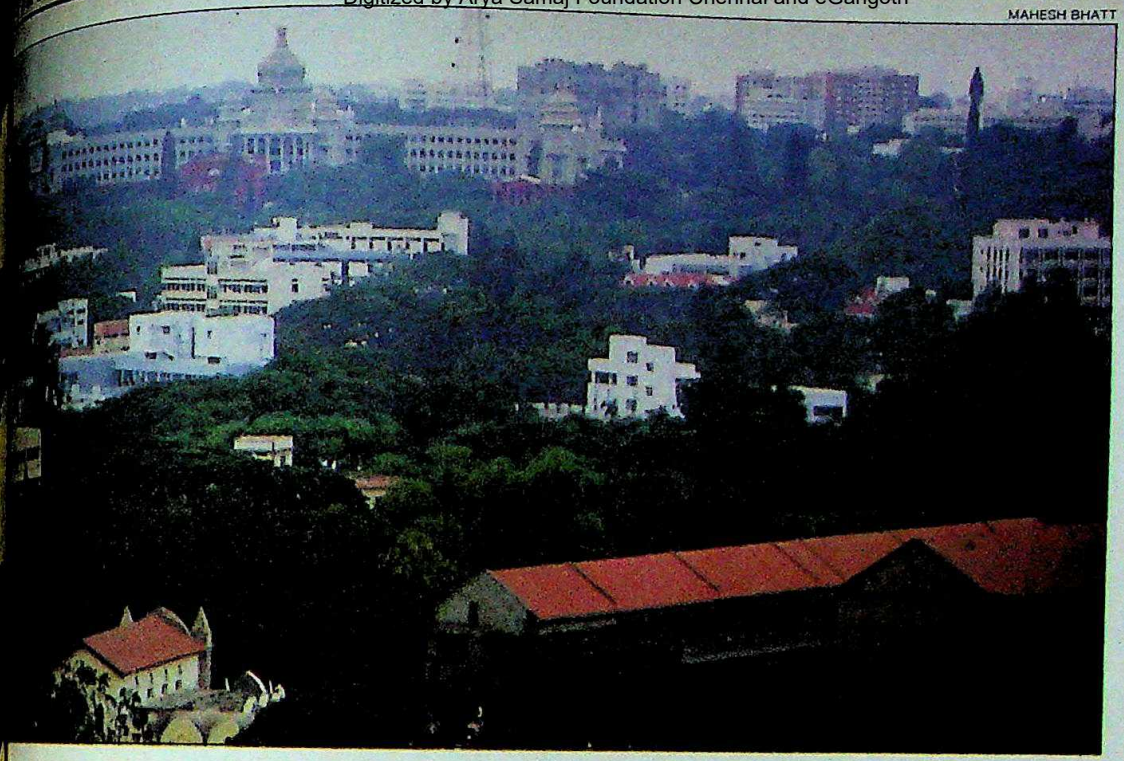
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MAHESH BHATT



View of the city: garden glory

NGALORE

Green Evolution

orestation drive has made the city a lush haven

ANGALORE is the fastest growing city in Asia in perhaps more ways than one. Besides industries and repreneurs, it has been sprouting ees at an amazing rate. The greening ngalore must rank as a singular ess story of its kind. In fact, when Delhi Development Authority was tically scouring the country for metre-high saplings to plant on memorial of Mrs Gandhi after her ssination, they finally found them Bangalore nursery.

ort success of this kind is not ieved overnight. A commando- operation to plant thousands of in every corner of the city was ched several years ago. The entire was mobilised in the effort to re Bangalore's fabled reputation the Garden City' of India.

he city's mantle had begun to slip me of that curse-cum-blessing growth: it had led to a popula- plosion and rapid urbanisation. ed by the city's fading reputa- the then chief minister, R. Gundu rew down the gauntlet to his s in 1982. How many trees could nt in a year? The audacious answer was an amazing 10,000. Right, do it, he said.

The Karnataka Government set up a team of three dozen officials within the Forestry Department. Armed with the ardour of conservation and one bulldozer, the goal was to plant saplings in every corner of Bangalore.

The team's first task was to create nurseries containing dozens of species. The next problem was protecting the saplings against the depredations of cattle and hooligans. Conventional tree guards proved too expensive given the gigantic dimensions of the operation. Iron tree guards were liable to be pinched while empty coal-tar drums would block out the light needed to nourish the saplings. So the team—christened the Green Belt Division—devised their own cheap version of a tree-guard using eucalyptus poles and wire mesh.

Once cattle and vandals had been taken care of, the need to nurture the fragile saplings through their early growth was the priority. While other cities have traffic wardens, Bangalore appointed "tree wardens". Today a 270-strong brigade patrols the streets of the city on the look-out for any person or creature prone to harm the young saplings' growth. A total of 50 species were planted including African Tulip, Ashoka, Champak, Mahogony and Queen's Flower.

But a tree's life is never easy. Even if it's given state protection from hungry cows and antisocial elements, it still has linesmen to deal with. There have been many reports of minor skirmishes between the city's tree wardens and the men from the Karnataka electricity board who've been lopping off branches in order to clear overhead power cables.

Despite their grumblings, though, all the hazards assailing the city's saplings have been overcome and the drive to create a Garden of Eden has succeeded: 80 per cent of Bangalore's roads, 75 per cent of schools, hospitals and burial grounds, 50 per cent of parks and 50 per cent of vacant land have been planted with trees.

But there's another group of people who've been heard muttering angrily about the trees sprouting everywhere. No, not the electricity linesmen. The city's asthmatics. The verdant boom is said to have aggravated nasal problems. Asthmatics complain that the trees have turned Bangalore into a hell-hole. Well, there's never a cloud without some dark lining.

—C.B. YESHVANTH KUMAR

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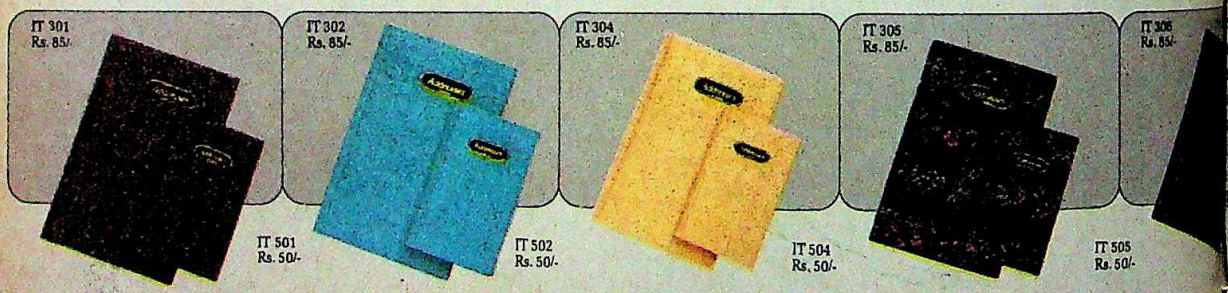
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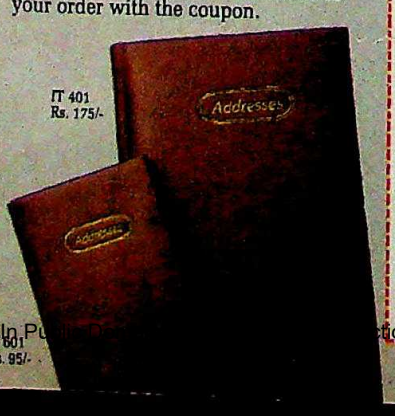
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Time of Reckoning



THE US is rapidly approaching the point in the Middle East crisis where a choice must be made. America cannot afford to let its first post-Cold War act of global leadership drift into a stalemate between a war of controversial purpose or the abandonment of goals adamantly reiterated by US President George Bush and the entire international community.

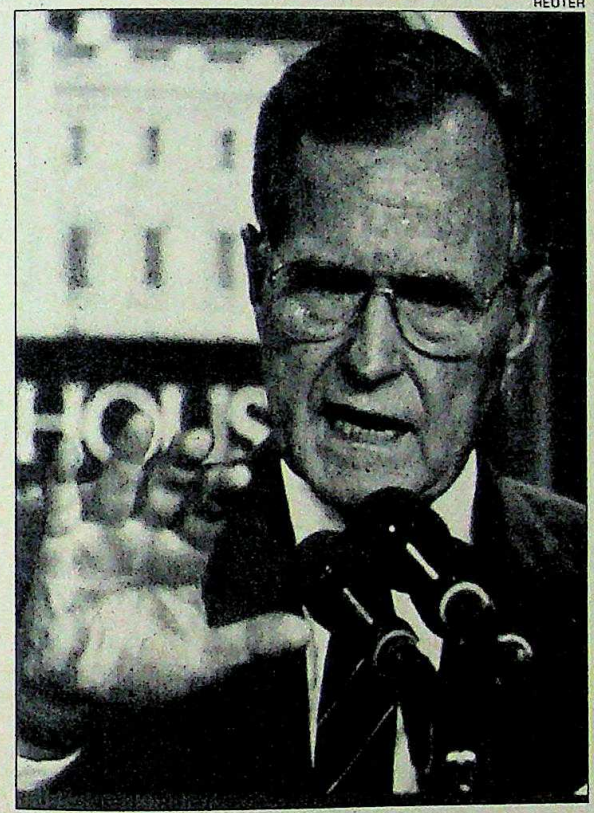
To achieve the proclaimed US and UN objectives by imposing sanctions, at least six hurdles must be overcome: (1) the sanctions must bite (2) they must be maintained throughout any negotiations (3) compromise proposals cannot be considered (4) once the UN terms are achieved, arms control objectives must be addressed (5) the military option must remain intact psychologically, technically and diplomatically during the entire course of the negotiations, and (6) there must be no major upheavals whatsoever to reflect the US or to rend Arab cohesion.

To state these hurdles is to set forth the practical impossibility of clearing them. Even if the sanctions do bite within a time frame relevant to political processes, Iraq is unlikely to offer to negotiate an unconditional surrender. In that case, pressures to ease the sanctions will be difficult to resist. Moderate Arab neighbours will privately note that none of the original goals in the public discussion would reduce Iraq's military pre-eminence or remove Kuwait completely. If they conclude that they will be condemned to live with a dominant Iraq, they will begin their own negotiations. Recent remarks by Saudi Arabian Defence Minister Sultan Ibn Abdul Aziz suggest that the haggling may already begun. But will the psychological basis for a military option persist after months of such inconclusive manoeuvring? And without a realistic military threat, how can the US/UN objectives be achieved?

The common feature of all the schemes leading to negotiations is that they undermine the military option by consuming time, exact no penalty for aggression, looting a country or taking hostages, and leave as the only disputed issue the extent of the aggressor's gains. To be fair, many who opt for sanctions-induced negotiations recognise this dilemma. They propose to protect a settlement by a new regional security system based on a significant US military presence in Saudi Arabia. I consider this a dangerous mirage. If, after the adamant pronouncements from Washington and the deployment of a large force, the US objectives could not be reached, no Gulf state would easily entrust its fate to a long-term American presence.

Even if despair led some of the Gulf nations to invite a continued American ground presence, this would at best be temporary and, at worst, accelerate the mounting chaos. The often-heard argument that America proved its staying power in Korea and Europe, misses the point. Conditions in the Gulf are just not comparable to Europe or north east Asia. There, American forces contributed to domestic stability; in Saudi Arabia they would threaten it. A substantial US ground establishment would soon become the target of radical and nationalist agitation. Once Iraq has faced down US and UN terms, such a force would sooner or later become hostage to revolutionary Iraq, fundamentalist Iran and events substantially out of our control. And at present no Arab force is available to balance Iraq in the Gulf in such circumstances.

REUTER



Bush must decide at what time the sanctions will turn into an alibi to dilute US objectives. Choosing war is the President's dilemma.

Saddam Hussein's intransigence may well reflect the calculation that every passing week erodes the likelihood that the forces assembled in the desert can be used against him and that if war appears imminent he can always defuse the crisis by opening negotiations along the line sketched here.

In short, if the US is to emerge intact from the Middle East, it must choose a strategy appropriate to its objectives or else choose objectives achievable by whatever policy we are willing to implement. And we should have no illusions. In the immediate aftermath of Iraqi aggression, it was perhaps possible to limit the damage by a policy of stabilising the Kuwait-Saudi Arabian border. But after the deployment of a vast expeditionary force and the Administration's unqualified call for unconditional withdrawal, merely doing so would undermine America's relevance to the Middle East and shake

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moderate Muslim governments from the Gulf to Morocco.

The Administration must decide at what point the sanctions will turn into an alibi to dilute our objectives. Choosing war will be neither easy nor attractive; this is, in fact, the President's dilemma. But that such a decision might have to be made has been implicit in the Administration's actions. Reports suggest Washington is waiting for a suitable provocation. It is hard to see what more Iraq might do to justify military action than to engage in naked aggression, to destroy the nation of Kuwait and take a thousand American hostages.

The diplomatic scenario by which military action can be implemented requires especially thoughtful preparation. Two methods are available: authorisation by the UN and a unilateral invocation of Article 51, which defines the right of self-defence.

IF we seek UN approval what may well happen is that some nations will not want to assume responsibility for actions which they otherwise recognise as necessary. Others, though agreeing in substance, may be reluctant to elaborate a theory of great power military intervention. Still others will disagree with both the substance and execution. And the UN debates are certain to be protracted, which would give Iraq an opportunity to strengthen its defences and perhaps to pre-empt. Any authorisation will almost surely be hedged with restrictions that may defeat its purpose.

To invoke Article 51, the Administration needs to prepare the American people and involve the Congress. The President would have to spell out why he insists on the UN terms, why they may lead to military action, and why an important objective of such a conflict would be to establish a stable balance of power in the Gulf. None of this, he must make clear, will be either easy or cost-free.

If the President decides on such a course, it is to be hoped that military strategy will remain related to realistic political objectives. Outsiders should not play field-marshal. But America has no interest in weakening Iraq to a point where it becomes a tempting target for covetous neighbours. We do not want to invite another try at hegemony in the Middle East, perhaps by Iran, perhaps by Syria. If war proves unavoidable, our objective should be not to destroy Iraq, but rather to raise the cost of occupying Kuwait to unacceptable levels while reducing Iraq's capacity to threaten its neighbours.

Reports of another reinforcement of 100,000 men and women for Saudi Arabia suggests a commitment to a frontal assault. Perhaps in the end there is no other choice than an attack on entrenched Iraqi positions in Kuwait. But ground combat involving heavy casualties against an enemy tempered by the experience of an eight-year defensive war of attrition with Iran should be an absolutely last resort. Before this, other approaches must be fully considered.



The destruction of the Iraqi defence complex especially its chemical and nuclear facilities would improve the military balance in the Gulf and speed up the effect of sanctions.

The destruction of the Iraqi military/industrial complex, especially its chemical and nuclear facilities as well as its missile forces, would improve the military balance in the Gulf and would speed up the effect of sanctions. Such a strategy would rely on air and naval power and use ground forces primarily to overawe a response.

As the Government of Iraq, which is after all a military dictatorship, sees its principal source of power erode, a negotiation more compatible with stated US objectives could result. Even if one of the compromises sketched above can eventually be adopted—a contingency I would regret—the setback would be eased by the reduction in the Iraqi military threat..

The Pentagon is rightly allergic to the kind of detailed management imposed on it in the Vietnam war, but surely there is a middle ground that leaves tactical decisions to the commander while preserving the strategic choices for the President.

Without doubt, the military option would prove painful. It might trigger major demonstrations in many Muslim countries; it could well evoke a next wave of terrorism. Saddam Hussein might also spread the conflict. But these dangers must be weighed against the risks of an even larger conflict later on, if a demonstration of American impotence leads to a collapse of moderate governments, and the disintegration of all order.

As the Administration makes decisions, it deserves sympathy for the anguish of its choices and the forbearance with which it has managed events so far. It is to be hoped that it can proceed in a way that avoids both a military strategy of total destructiveness and a diplomatic strategy committed to implementing UN resolutions—the progressive disregard of which will at some point demonstrate the UN's impotence rather than an international consensus—that, whatever our destination, we do not arrive at it by design rather than as captives of circumstance.

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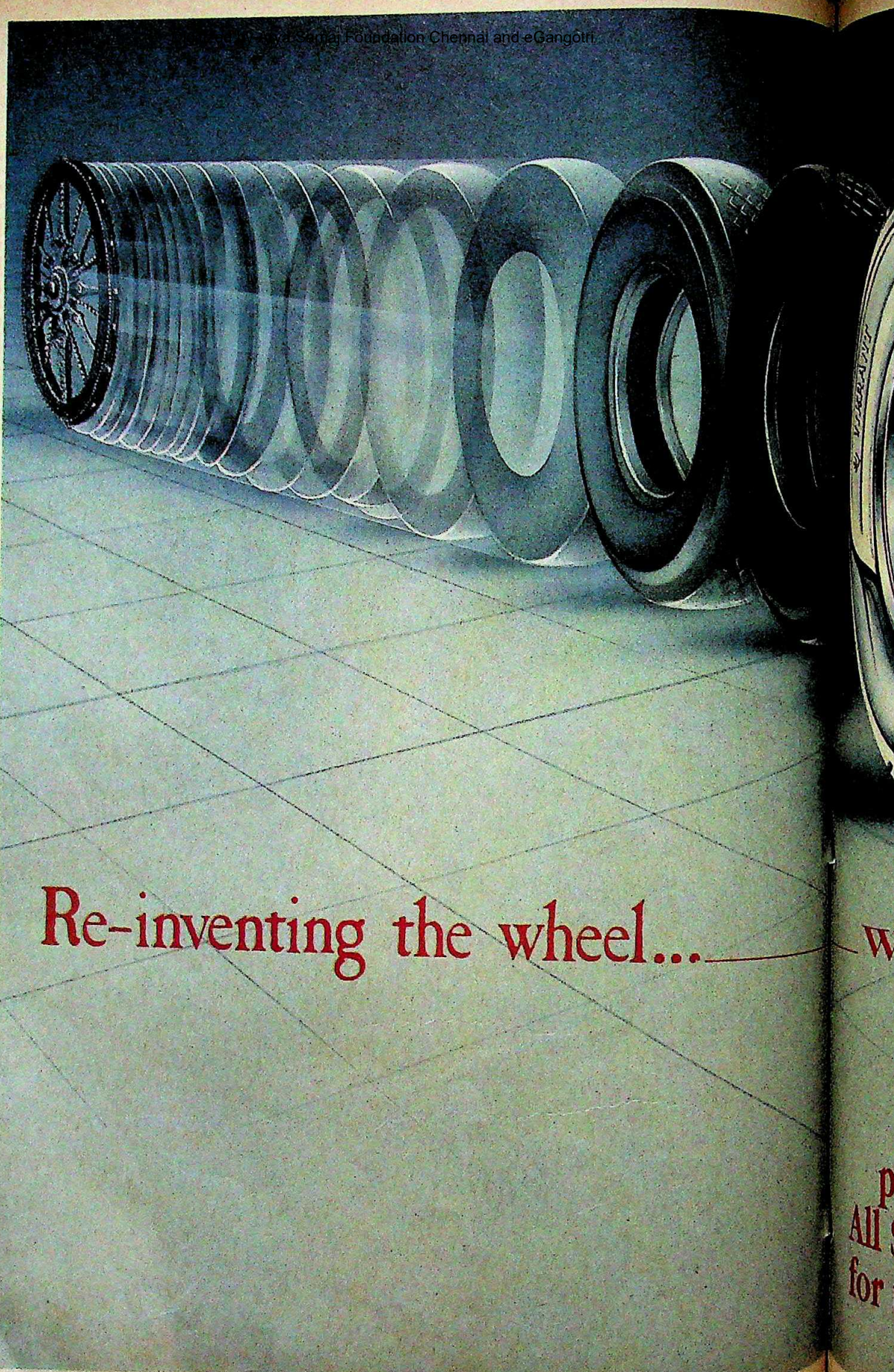
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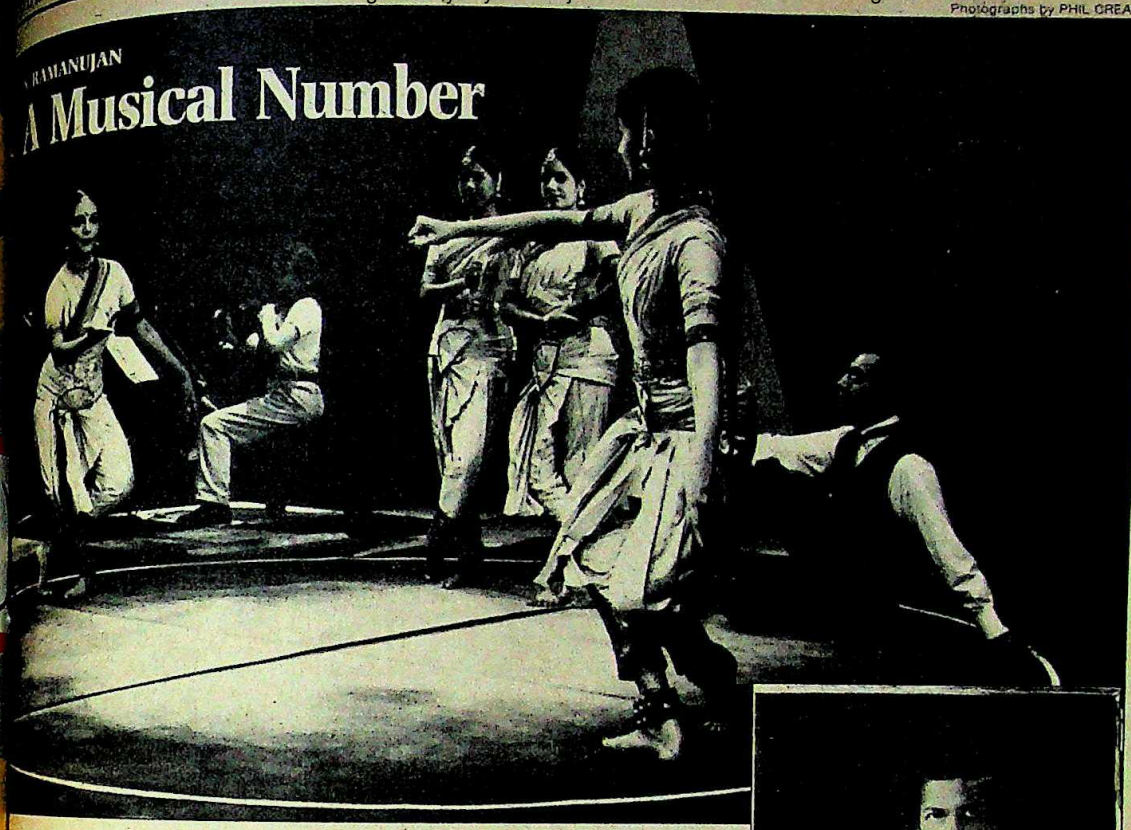
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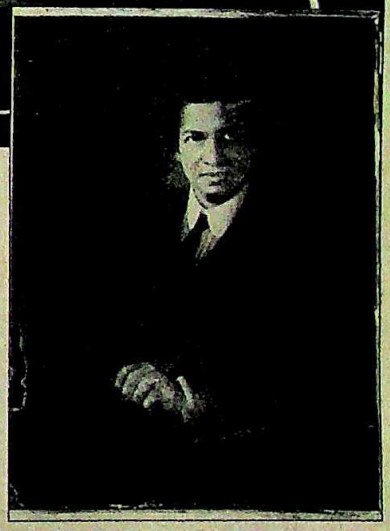
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Photographs by PHIL CREAN

V. RAMANUJAN

A Musical Number





Still from *Correspondences* (above); (inset) Ramanujan: ahead of his times

AT the end of this piquant Bharat Natyam "opera", one thought comes to mind: to twist W.B. Yeats around a bit, "Who is the dancer, what is the dance?"

It's a difficult question. To choose the vehicle of classical dance to recreate the short but enormously eventful life of Srinivasa Ramanujan, one of the most gifted theoretical mathematicians the world has ever known, who died at the age of 32 just 70 years ago, is a madcap enterprise. But then, in the modern world, Ramanujan would be an anomaly, understandable perhaps only through the abstract, metaphysical rigours of classical dance turned on its head.

One such biographical treatise, entitled *Correspondences*, has been produced by a London-based dance company headed by Indian classical dancer-choreuse, Shobana Jayasingh. It relies on Ramanujan's letters and his almost childlike belief in God and religion to unravel and tease out his past. The opera drew packed houses in London and is presently on a provincial tour of Britain.

Why pick on Ramanujan, whose illegible, indecipherable scribbles—87 densely packed pages in all—gave the airy world of theoretical mathematics little else but migraines? Because, only with the help of powerful computers have the world's mathematicians all over the world caught on to the fact that he was far ahead of his time, and that his final squiggles, made in the frantic few months before his death of tuberculosis on April 26, 1920, are like manna to a field that is in danger of abstracting itself out of existence.

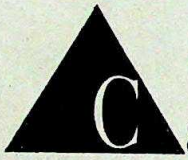
The 87 pages in question, filled with strange number sequences written in a language that did little but confuse because of its mathematical obscurity, gathered dust for decades as they were regarded as the delirious outpourings of a feverish mind.

Computers brought the foxed mathematicians out of limbo. They have by now realised that his formulae lend themselves readily to computerese, an outstanding bit of futuristic anticipation on Ramanujan's part. One of his formulae has even been used to construct a series of computer procedures and, for the first time, to rapidly calculate *pi*, the circumference of a circle divided by its diameter, correct to one billion decimals. His untidy notes have already led to significant advances in the 'superstring theory' of cosmology, which tries to grapple with the intricacies and mathematical quirkiness of the Unified Field Theory. "Ramanujan was years ahead of his time, an absolute genius," says Professor George Andrews of Pennsylvania University, who is currently using an IBM supercomputer to crack Ramanujan's codes.

Ramanujan's career, careening between futuristic brilliance and belief in a kind of benign pantheism, was unorthodox even by Cambridge standards. Born on December 22, 1887, into an Iyengar Brahmin family in south India, he rose from being a lowly clerk in the Madras Port Trust to a collaborator with Godfrey Harold Hardy, Fellow of Trinity College, Cambridge, arguably the greatest pure mathematician of his day. Ferreting out Ramanujan's genius from grubby notes that he received by post one morning in 1913, he secured a place for Ramanujan at Trinity the next year.

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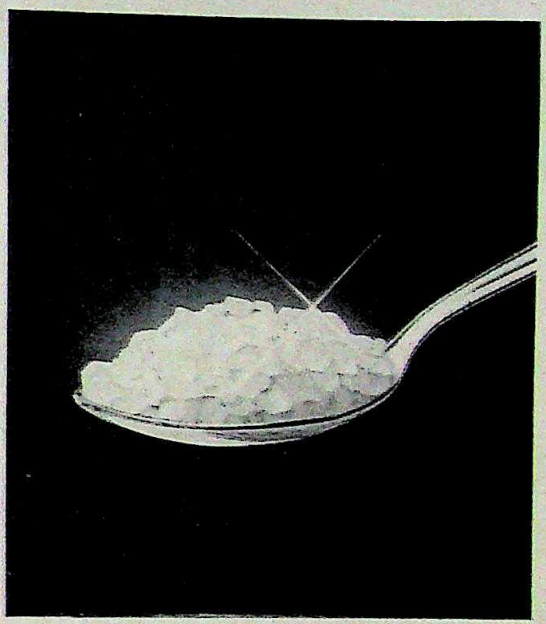
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Ramanujan and Hardy over the next five years jointly wrote as many as 20 scholarly papers.

Ramanujan, however, remained abnormally reticent about how he could put complex formulae on paper without showing either the proof or their working. His mumble was that his family goddess, Namagiri, revealed the secrets to him in his dreams. Hardy was a staunch atheist but his cynicism did not come in the way of forging a friendship with the amiable Indian who was often found in his pyjamas, ritually cooking vegetables in a frying pan in his rooms at Trinity.

The credit for "rediscovering" Ramanujan's "lost notes"—as they are now called—must go to American mathematician George Andrews, 51, who dug them out of mothballs at the famous Wren Library at Trinity. "Within 10 minutes," he says, "I recognised their significance."

Soon, Ramanujan's "lost notes" were in demand the world over. A biography, of course, had to follow and one, entitled *The Man Who Knew Infinity*, by Robert Kanigel, an academic in Baltimore, is being prepared.

Ramanujan's genius didn't fail him even as he lay in a hospital in Putney. Hardy, it is said, once went to visit him and peremptorily grumbled that the number of his taxi had been a "dull" 1729. Ramanujan almost erupted, saying, "No, Hardy! It is a very interesting number. It is the smallest number expressible as the sum of two cubes in two different ways."

With all these accolades flowing his way, even if posthumously, Shobana Jayasingh's pirouette seems justified. Like Ramanujan, she comes from Madras. Her mother was a mathematics teacher and Shobana inherited a love of the subject. As background research, she travelled from London to Madras to meet Ramanujan's widow, Janaki, now a frail lady of 70, and found that she was of little help. Janaki married Ramanujan when she was 12; he left for Cambridge soon after and when he returned in 1919, he had only a year left to live.

For the opera, Shobana roped in three other talented dancers: Girija Murali from Kerala, Monisha Patil from Bombay and Subathra Shanteepan from Sri Lanka. She found Ramanujan's distinctive number partitioning—the way he broke up his numbers—uncannily matching the choreography of Bharat Natyam. The tribute became a fitting one.

—AMIT ROY in London

RABINDRA SANGEET

A New Tune

Tagore's music translated

FOR once, the fiercely provincial Bengali *bhadralok* has been surprised by the temerity—and success—of his Hindi counterpart. The latter has finally had his way with Rabindranath Tagore's *sangeet*—which the Bengali considers sacrosanct, not open to lexical meddling or translations—and can now listen to it in his own tongue.

Two cassettes of Tagore's songs, translated into Hindi, have recently been released. *O Meri Matribhumi*, sung by Aarti Mukherjee, was translated by Calcutta stockbroker Daulal Kothari and *Tum Kaise Aisa Geet Gaate Chalte*, sung by Usha Mangeshkar and Suresh Wadekar, has been rendered into Hindi by Jalaj Bhaduri. This is the culmination of a long-drawn battle—with the proponents of the translation of *Rabindra Sangeet* into other languages pitted against the rigidity of Vishwa Bharati, which holds the copyrights on all works by Tagore in a mono-lingual stranglehold till 1991. While the music board of Vishwa Bharati refused to let anyone fiddle with *Rabindra Sangeet* in the original, it had, through a back gate, passed on the stage rights of the songs but refused to release disc rights.

In June this year, however, it approved, for the first time, the commercial release of the two audio cassettes. By all reports, the two cassettes, with 10 songs each, are doing reasonably well.

Recalls translator Jalaj Bhaduri, who was instrumental in prompting Vishwa Bharati to loosen its hold: "There was deep-rooted prejudice in Bengal against other languages, especially Hindi." Tagore himself, one presumes, would not have minded being translated, having liberally peppered his songs as he did with words in Hindi as well as Hindi-based dialects like Bhojpuri and Maithili. To Tagore, words like *toote, maange, laaj, aas, ishara, sharam* and several others were considered common currency.

The Hindi version of Tagore songs is likely to lead to some linguistic munificence. For one, till now, *Rabindra Sangeet* was being translated for stage shows from English, but now the Hindi version could become the source for many other Indian languages, effectively "nationalising" Tagore. Of course, in such a charged situation, the pitfalls can be many. Immeasurable doses of emotion and spontaneity have been lost in translation.

And the pratfalls are also many. A translation is often halting and stilted, critised and sometimes ludicrous.

Mukherjee (left); Mangeshkar, Wadekar





The Hindi version of Tagore's songs is likely to lead to linguistic munificence and will 'nationalise' him.

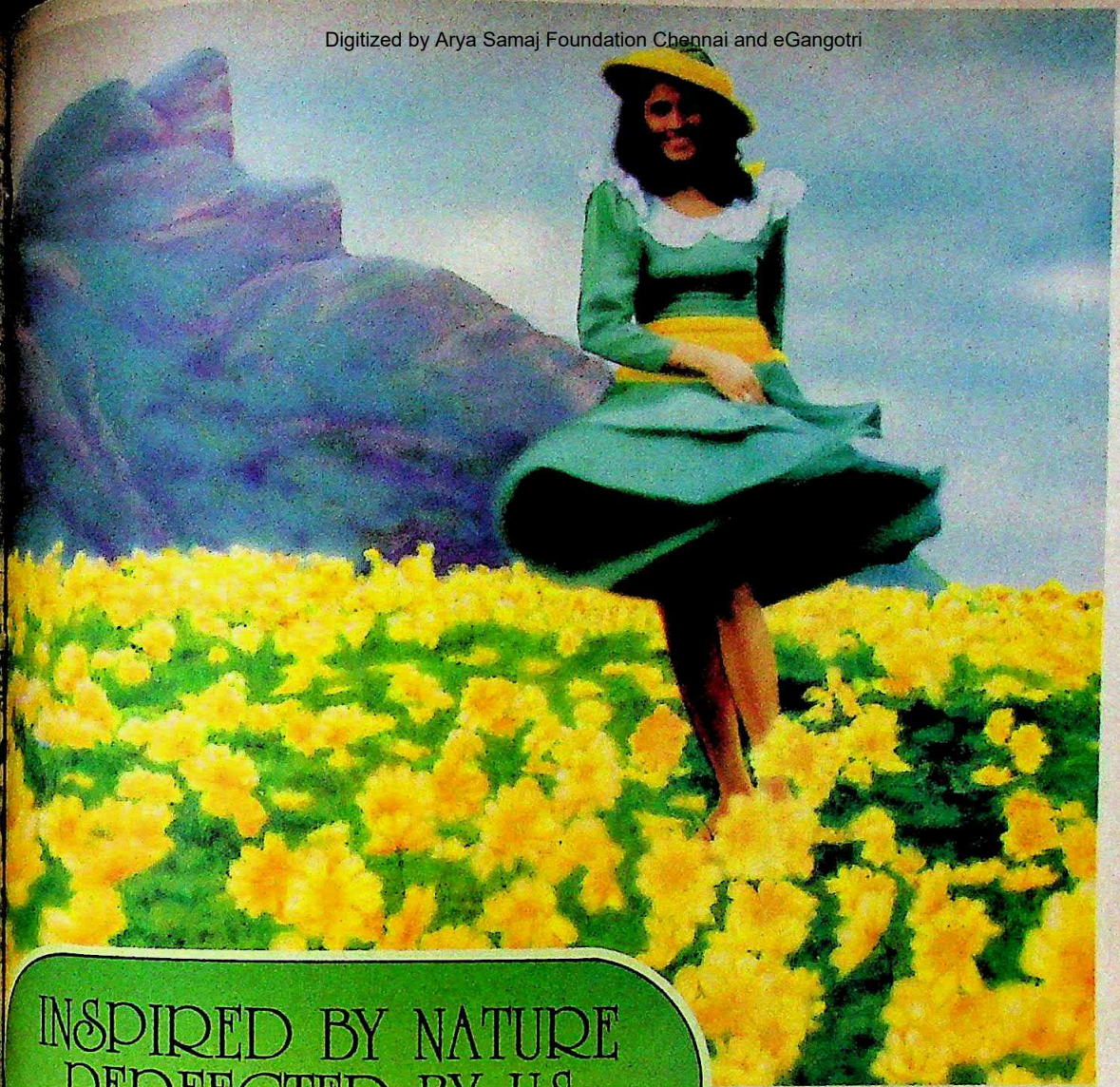
else do you account for *Yeh Mam... Mujhe Nahin Saje (E Manihaar A... Naahi Saaje)* and *Tera Yeh Ab... (Tomaar Holo Shuru)*? But there are evergreens like *Teri Aawaz Pe Ku... Tor Daak Shune Keu)* woven in... cassettes which make it worth the... of listening to occasional garble.

Meanwhile, realising that they... run out of jurisdiction in 1991, ... Vishwa Bharati and the West Be... Government have asked the Cen... amend the Copyright Act so ... Vishwa Bharati can retain the ... rights. This move, is expected to ... and Tagore should get around ... then.

—UTTAM SEN

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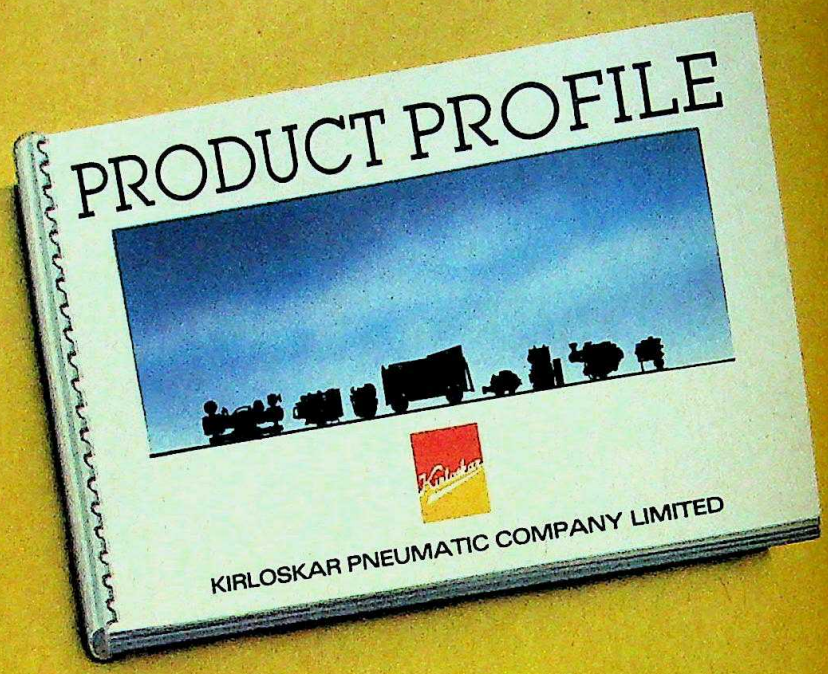
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land Tale

ot novel shows promise

JOURNEY
DIRA GANESAN
Knopf
Rs 140; Pages: 176



ISLANDS have been favoured as a structural device by novelists for a long time now and it's easy to see why. Like a scientist who can create optimum conditions in his laboratory to rm an experiment that would be rwise difficult, the novelist within fictional island can be the master l the surveys.

binson Crusoe and more recently ding's *The Lord of the Flies* and anne Wiggins' *John Dollar* are examples of novelists working sland theme. Indira Ganesan's *The* ney uses an island for its setting but re is an essential difference: unlike ther novels I've mentioned, where sland is a mere two-tone setting rves to highlight the peculiarithe individuals who have taken porary residence there, in this the island Pi is a complete world as important as the novel's gonists. Pi, an abbreviation for ero's Island, is 'a chunk of India not quite India left to float in ay of Bengal'.

s to this small and isolated world Renu Krishnan, an islander, re- from the United States where family is settled) to attend the ral of Rajesh, a beloved cousin. ed with remorse and guilt be- she imagines that she is respon- for the death of her cousin Renu's from a happy homecoming. the way she sees it, Rajesh's death train accident is divine retribution childhood accident where the two killed a monkey (the monkey is ly transformed in Renu's mind Hanuman). This sort of superstiis one of the many contradictions ddle Renu; in complete contrast nger sister, Meenakshi, who to be called Manx, is the archeAmerican teenager—bored, ident, rebellious and as sure of as Renu is not.

The island gradually draws the two sisters into its net of myth, superstition, tradition and family—Renu sinks into its cocoon almost willingly (so crushed is she by the weight of her guilt and sorrow over Rajesh) while Manx fights it all the way, poking fun at her various aunts (the book, incidentally, is dominated by women characters), the island customs, the unexciting entertainment it offers and so on.

Inevitably, once the death ceremonies are over the aunts propose that Renu be married off (Pi is, after all, an amalgam of Tamil Nadu, Pondicherry and Goa in the most traditional sense). In keeping with her character, she acquiesces to their plans.

Just as it seems the book will quietly dwindle to a close, Ganesan grabs it by the scruff of the neck, shakes it up and



Ganesan: fine turn of phrase

sends it off in a new direction. The sisters decide to trundle away on a journey of discovery around the island of Pi and run into sundry freedom fighters plotting ineffectual revolutions, mysterious temptresses, giantesses, ghosts, seeresses and bumbling hotel-keepers. The sisters' adventures are rather fun but one remains quite unsure of what it is all leading up to. Nor does the ending resolve matters. It is of a piece with the second half of the novel—interesting but not wholly convincing.

Despite this we have in Indira Ganesan a writer of much promise. She has a felicitous turn of phrase ('a mosque, mysterious as a wrapped gift'), well-delineated characters and an ability to create worlds that beguile the reader. One looks forward to reading her next novel.

—DAVID DAVIDAR

Rain Revels

Superb monsoon travelogue

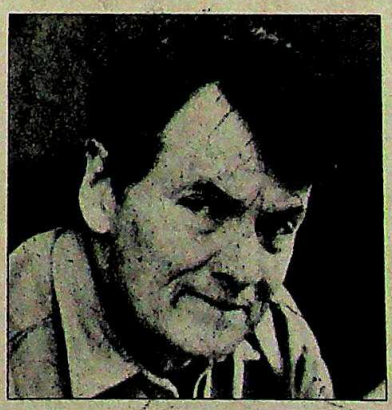
CHASING THE MONSOON
by ALEXANDER FRATER
Viking (Penguin India)
Price: Rs 250; Pages: 273



A poem called *Walter* by England's finest post-Auden poet, Philip Larkin, begins: "If I were called in/ To construct a religion/I should make use of water." This clearly echoes a habit of mind among the weather-obsessed natives of Great Britain.

Poetic celebrations of liquefaction exist virtually everywhere in their literary outpourings, from Chaucer's April showers to Forster's monsoon episodes to Eliot's thirst for wetness. Nearer home, the fog gets into Kalidasa's *Meghdoot*, while sogginess casts a cloud over several poems by Jayanta Mahapatra and Kamala Das. Clearly, none of these writers had their homes in Cherrapunji.

In this respect, Alexander Frater's final destination seems wonderfully



Frater: witty and evocative

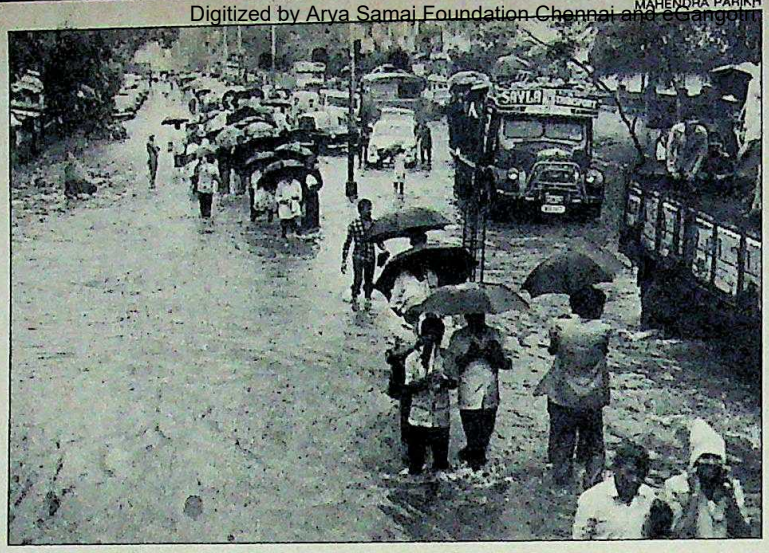
eccentric. The object of his travels is to get a personal gauge of the Indian monsoon and to culminate his wanderings under the ceaseless showers of Cherrapunji. His travelogue is doubtlessly the last word on literary monsoon manias. Scheduling his travels to suit the imprecision of wayward nimbus clouds, the writer succeeds with finesse in making a religion of rain.

Frater's father was a Scottish

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MAHENDRA PARIKH



Bombay: relief and municipal torment

missionary in the South Pacific whose letters home were besotted with the weather. His unfulfilled ambition to visit Assam passes genetically as a thirst for the rain god into his son, who tails monsoon winds all the way from Trivandrum to Meghalaya. This seems, on the face of it, an odd enterprise. It is much more normal for travellers to search out the exotic and the bizarre, and to merely record the seasons in passing. Frater reverses this procedure.

For him the weather is precisely what is marvellous, and his book shows that it is possible to read the weather differently. It reveals a whole culture and patterns of behaviour which derive from the annual uncertainty of determining which way the winds are blowing. The book comprises witty and evocative vignettes of people in all parts of India who anxiously await the recurrence of a seasonal pattern that is necessary for their very survival.

Frater's track is, rather literally, weather-beaten: it begins in Kerala simply because the monsoon does. If May is depraved here, it is because everyone is phoning the meteorological office. The Malayalee met men, for all their gadgets and calculations, are as morose and harassed over the whereabouts of the monsoon as the politicians who pester them relentlessly for news of it.

The monsoon is their albatross. They see water water everywhere, specially on dry and cloudless days, hoping that by praying devoutly enough they will make it pour and gain themselves a salary raise. One weatherman defines 'monsoon' accurately: "It's like the human brain. We know it, but we don't know it." Another traveller sums it up succintly with a folk proverb: "If the sky fails, the earth will surely fail too."

Brilliantly unrelated to all this, a mystic masseur talks to Frater about his profession. He says there are three things he never massages: "gent's penis, lady's chests, and the face of both sex". The best thing about this book is, in fact, this ability to integrate the most inconsequential and casual information into a delightfully fluid narrative.

In Goa and Bombay, Frater meets both high-fliers and the hoi polloi: poet Dom Moraes and journalist Pritish Nandy, as well as taxi-drivers and beach-strollers on Chowpatty. He watches the monsoon break as a flood that drives the city in a mixture of emotional relief and municipal torment. In Delhi next, he describes the operations of a Kafka-esque bureaucracy intent on denying him a travel permit to Shillong. But Frater manages, in the end, to make the right connections. He flies off to the Northeast, via that stupendous maze of open sewers and shapely pot-holes also known as Calcutta. His engaging, eccentric quest ends when he buys an umbrella in Cherrapunji.

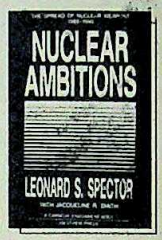
Chasing the Monsoon is part autobiography, part travelogue, and part monsoon manual. More important, it is the dogged pursuit of insights into the emotions and moods of a whole nation caught up by an erratic and unpredictable weather pattern. Most important of all, it ranks with James Cameron's *Indian Summer* as a potential classic of travel-writing on India.

—RUKUN ADVANI

Warning No

Indo-Pak arms race trac

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by LEONARD SPECTOR with JACQUELINE R. SMITH
Westview Press
Price: Not stated; Pages: 450



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But the ambiguity may v
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—SHEKHAR

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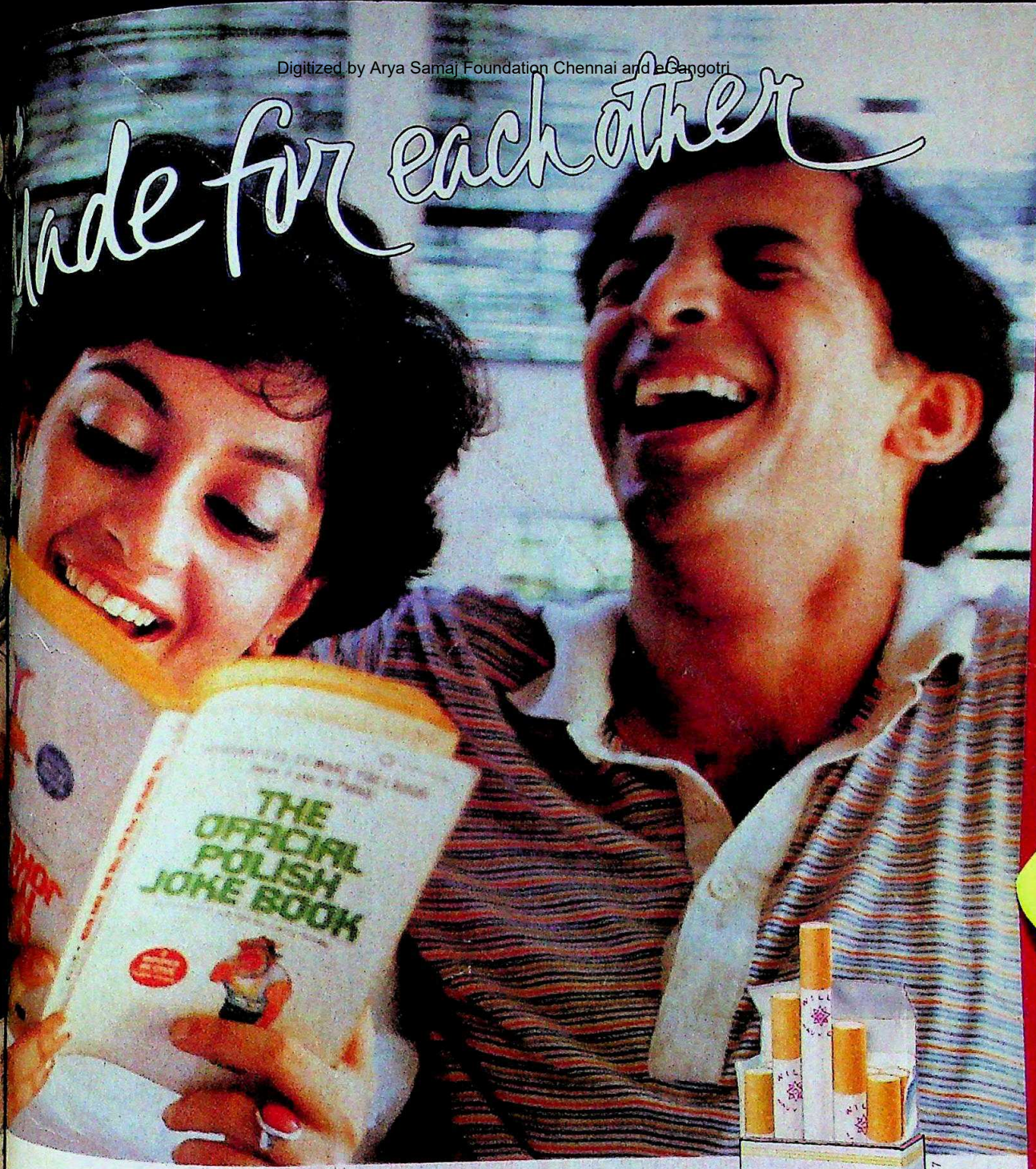
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INDIA
DECEMBER 15, 1990
TODAY



EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW WITH RUSHDIE IN HIDING
SHARAD PAWAR: GROWING CLOUT
MOOD OF THE MUSLIMS

CHANDRA SHEKHAR

Playing The Double Game

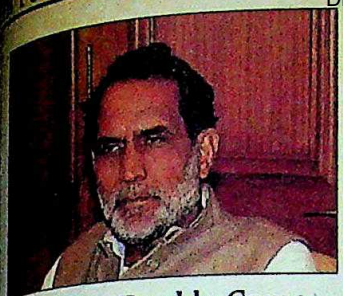
In order to ensure the survival of his rump government a surprisingly cocky Chandra Shekhar is playing cat and mouse with the Congress(I) and his own party.

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Playing the Double Game

Contrary to popular wisdom, Chandra Shekhar has not come undone in the very first weeks of his coming to power. In fact, with machiavellian shrewdness he is holding his own, exploiting the fears and weaknesses of both the Congress(I) and his own party to run things his own way.

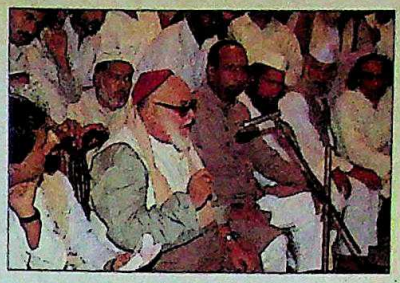
COVER STORY 26



Moving Centrestage

Always powerful, Maharashtra Chief Minister Sharad Pawar has suddenly moved onto centrestage in national politics. He was instrumental in hammering out the arrangement between the Congress(I) and Chandra Shekhar, and is today Rajiv Gandhi's most important regional satrap.

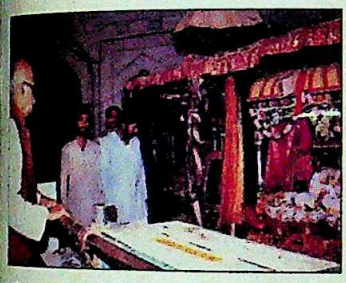
SPECIAL REPORT 40



A Mood of Moderation

The Muslims showed admirable restraint during the last two months when communal tension threatened to erupt into uncontrollable fury. It seems as if considerable introspection has taken place within the community, and its leaders are beginning to move away from hawkish postures.

SPECIAL REPORT 44



The Siege Ahead

The VHP-BJP combine is garnering strength to resume kar sewa at Ayodhya from December 6. The town is once again in the grip of communal tension. With the Uttar Pradesh Government now depending on the Congress(I) for survival there could be a change in the way the issue is tackled.

SPECIAL REPORT 48



In the Twilight Zone

Salman Rushdie has been in hiding for 21 months now. INDIA TODAY publishes exclusive extracts from a recent interview in which he talks about the trauma and loneliness of being a fugitive from the Iranian *fatwa* and how he hopes it will all end soon and he will be a free man again.

SPECIAL FEATURE 88



Exotic Experiments

After Zandra Rhodes' experiments with the saree ended in a whimper, designers have not dared touch the saree. But now they are at it again, transforming the staid saree with ravishing designs: with belts, with the pallu made of a separate fabric, and even with a turtleneck.

FASHION 164

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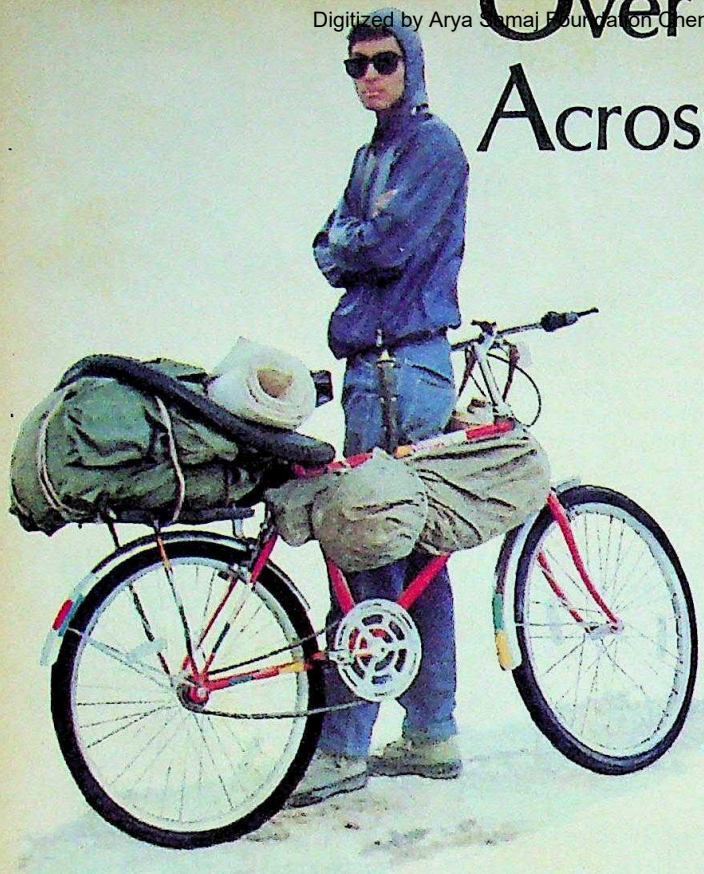
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Cover photograph by SHARAD SAXENA

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Over the mountains
Across a desert bleak





Where there's a Ranger, there's always a way.

On the road to Khardung La. Past Keylong the mountain crags rise up around you and the treeline disappears.

A shallow mountain stream flows over a rocky bed. Standing there with your bicycle, you wonder, *where's the road?*

And then—almost instantly—you correct yourself.

This *is* the road.

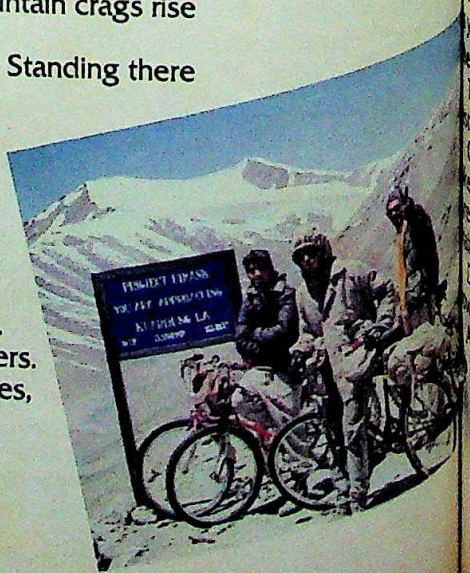
Riding the Mountain Trail

At 18383 feet above sea level, Khardung La Pass is the highest motorable road in the world.

And the Jumping Nuts—Rajan, Mahesh, Preetpal and Ankit—must be the youngest team to reach there.

As well as the *first* to do it on bicycles—Hero Rangers.

All along the route, heavy rains bring down landslides, covering the roads with slush.



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rough the roughs.
the moon.



After the steep ascent to Rohtang Pass, all that remains is a
trail ravaged by bulldozers.
So that more than the climb up, it's the descent that's intimidating.
uckles turning white, you clutch on to the brakes
you bump down the loose, rocky roadbed.

e Way of the Ranger

The road to Khardung La is also the perfect
track for a Hero Ranger.
On bone-shakingly rough roads, the all-terrain
e's tough frame holds its own. The fat balloon
es, with their deep treads, bite the dirt and
ntain ground control.
Die-cast brakes give you all the stopping
wer you need on steep descents.
All said, it's the one bike that can get you to the
of the world. And back.



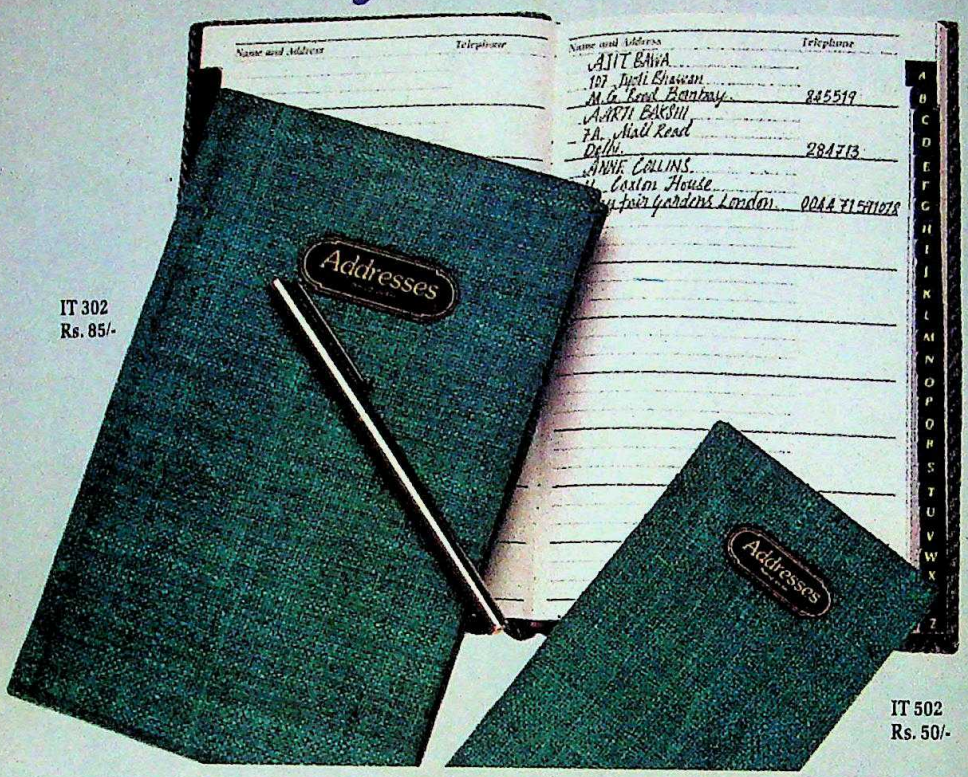
HERO Ranger

GO WHERE FEW WOULD DARE TO GO

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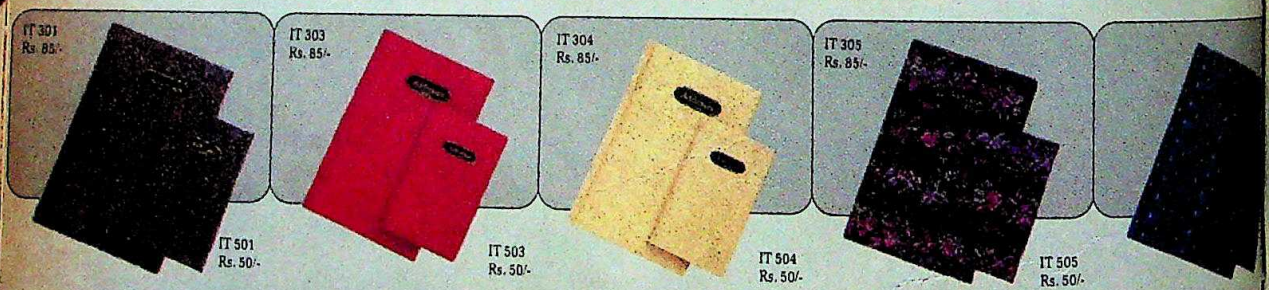
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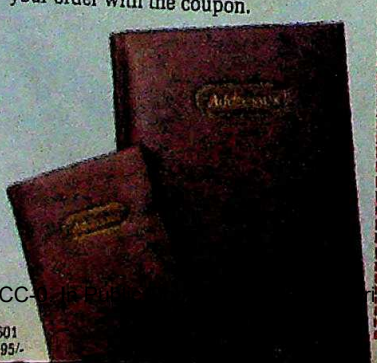
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SHAKY PERCH

V.P. Singh is dead in Indian politics ("How Long Will the Smiles Last?", November 30). Chandra Shekhar is writing the elegy, Rajiv Gandhi is performing the last rites and Devi Lal is the undertaker.

P.V. RAMANAMURTHY
Tirupati

IRRESPONSIBLE POLITICS

The Ayodhya incident is highly deplorable for a secular country like India ("Battlelines Drawn", November 15). However, Muslims all over the world praise the National Front government's stand against Hindu fundamentalists. Those Hindu fundamentalist leaders who claim to be the saviours of the nation are, in fact, the real enemies of the country. While the whole world is fighting against disease, starvation and poverty, we Indians are still squabbling about religious differences.

TARIQ TAMIMI
Jeddah

■ It seems that Shakespeare's King Lear, who was on the verge of madness, was summing up the personal and political philosophy of V.P. Singh when he said:

I will do such things
What they are yet I know not
But they shall be
The terror of the earth.

G.S. CHATURVEDI
Allahabad

■ Last fortnight's events could make one feel ashamed of being a citizen of India. With people committing murder and arson, the scenario was not very different from that of Nazi Germany. The only difference was that it was "people's sentiments" and *Hindutva* that were responsible for such fascist acts and not "state power".

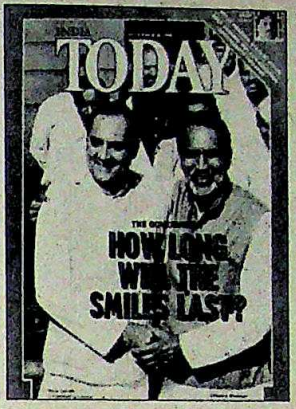
AJAY PANDEY
Ahmedabad

■ If the politicians in general and the Janata Dal heavyweights in particular have finished playing their game of musical chairs, we Indians would appreciate their getting down to the more serious business of governing the country.

SURENDRA MOODLIAR
Pune

■ V.P. Singh may have lost his government but he and the men remaining in his party seem to have come off best in this messy affair. They adopted certain principles and stuck to them. The worst exhibition of perfidy and political opportunism has been shown by Chandra Shekhar and his treacherous band and Rajiv Gandhi and his power-crazy followers. It will be interesting to see how traitors co-exist with snakes in the grass.

S. JAN DUTTA
New Delhi



Chandra Shekhar has assumed charge on a very weak wicket, with an effete team. Umpire Rajiv can get him out by simply lifting his finger.

Bangalore K. CHIDANAND KUMAR

Rajiv seems to have extended support to Chandra Shekhar after successfully bargaining for the burial of the Bofors issue.

New Delhi ANIL SATWIK

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■ First week of August: V.P. Singh announced the implementation of the Mandal report. The justification: social justice. Second half of October: V.P. Singh stopped L.K. Advani's Rath Yatra. The justification: secular principles had to be maintained. While Singh did not utter a word of sympathy over the death of over 50 students all this while, on October 26 he was on the verge of tears while addressing the nation. Hopefully the nation will be saved from such doublespeak in the future.

K.R. VANJARA
Baroda

■ There is a law of cybernetics which states: when a whole system is composed of a number of sub-systems, the one that tends to dominate is the one that is least stable. This mathematical law has been proved by our leaders. It is a shame indeed, that the birth-pangs of Rama in Tretayuga are used, thousands of years later in Kaliyuga, to hush up the death-rants in some parts of India. Even mutt heads who should know true Hinduism have joined nutheads and added fuel to the fire. Do the faithful followers of political Hindu leaders have no other worthwhile work to do than to get mad over a nonsensical non-issue? Who are the Hindu politicians trying to dupe by claiming that the Rath Yatra and kar sewa are really meant for national integration? *Bharatvasis* should not give votes to the 'political Hindus'.

S.M. SIVARAMAN
Madras

■ Rightly or wrongly the Hindus have for centuries believed that the Babri-Masjid site is the birthplace of Rama. It is the only place available to them for constructing the Ram temple whereas there are thousands of places in this country where a mosque can be located. Our Muslim brethren should dispassionately ponder over this and graciously consent to the temple being built. Such a broad-minded gesture will lead to communal peace.

T.A.K. RATNAM
Pattukottai, Tamil Nadu

HOODWINKING THE PRESS

Your denunciation of V.P. Singh ("Cry, Beloved Country", November 15) is ironic considering that all along, you have never questioned his "I will never hold public office" line. It seems like the entire English press had been hoodwinked by a shrewd politician whose every action since 1982 was directed towards only one ambition—sitting on the prime minister's chair.

RAJEEV PANT
Allahabad

CASTE DIVIDE

Your special feature on caste war in Bihar ("Harvest of Hatred", November 15)

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exposes the so-called people's representatives who are advocating a caste-based rift among the people so as to meet their political ends. It seems that Chief Minister Laloo Prasad Yadav is ruling the state only for the benefit of his own Yadav community.

Surat — ATUL RAI

TOURIST TRAUMA

So, India is going to throw a big party in 1991 ("A Hard Sell", November 15) which will be observed as "Visit India Year". But if "the Government has decided to close all tourist offices abroad in the name of economy" it seems like it's not sending out any invitations. Organising seminars for travel agents is a waste of money as foreign tourists don't take advice from agents. Tourists need information on things like current taxi fares, socially acceptable forms of dress and behaviour and train bookings. All this is generally unavailable at local information offices.

YMCA, New Delhi — BILL BRADDICK
a tourist from the UK

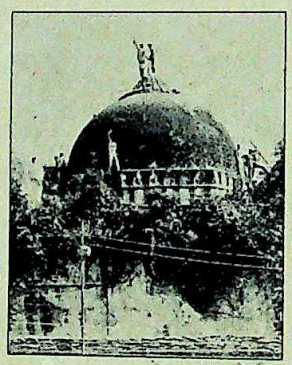
NOT MY WORDS

Appreciative though I am of the attention you have given my book, *Rajiv Gandhi: Son of a Dynasty* ("Effusions of Empathy", November 15), I cannot allow your reviewer to get away with misquoting me on such a crucial matter as the circumstances of Rajiv becoming prime minister. I did not say that the decision to induct Rajiv was Zail Singh's alone, only that Zail Singh claims this was the case. My book makes clear that Rajiv thinks otherwise: he says the decision was taken by Congress leaders before Zail Singh returned to the country.

London — NICHOLAS NUGENT

I know politics
is not our game,
The word 'Lord
Ram' is used just
as a name,
Who will be our
idol, whom
should we blame,
When all you turn
out to be the same,

Pune — THE ORTHODOX
a rock group



Advani and Vajpayee are the Mahmud of Gaznis and Aurangzebs of today doing the same as the past religious tyrants.

Bombay — V.N. GOUR

PROXIMITY PROBLEMS

Moral turpitude among army officers ("Quelling Sordid Affairs", October 31) cannot be condoned. But one must bear in mind that the army is a close-knit organisation where social life is very insular. Naturally, liaisons are bound to develop.

Pune — Lt-Colonel BUNNY D'SOUZA

UNFAIR ALLEGATIONS

Rear Admiral V. Bhagwat has to be commended for taking on the naval establishment ("Succession Storm", October 31). However he, and your article, seem to be taking a cheap shot at Vice-Admiral L. Ramdas. Insinuating that the unspecified "interest of the navy" may be compromised because Ramdas and some other officers have relatives with green cards is highly irresponsible. And what does the marriage of a vice-admiral's daughter to a Pakistani have to do with the selection of a navy chief?

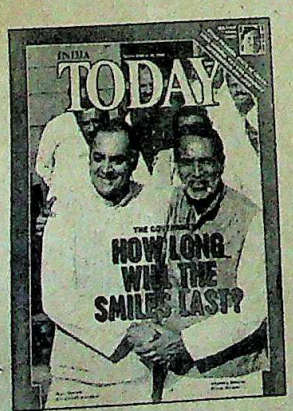
Bombay — HENRY DE SILVA

INCORRECT IMPRESSION

We have read with great pain and anguish the story on Punjab ("End of an Opportunity", October 15) and have taken strong objection to the mention of the so-called "secret meetings" of S.S. Mann with V.P. Singh. The meeting was no secret as its contents were widely reported in the press. The story also gives the impression that Mann entered into a quid pro quo for the removal of S.L. Kapoor and K.P.S. Gill. The fact is that the removal of Kapoor and Gill was and is a prerequisite for the creation of a congenial atmosphere in Punjab.

Chandigarh — MANINDERJIT SINGH
Press secretary to S.S. Mann

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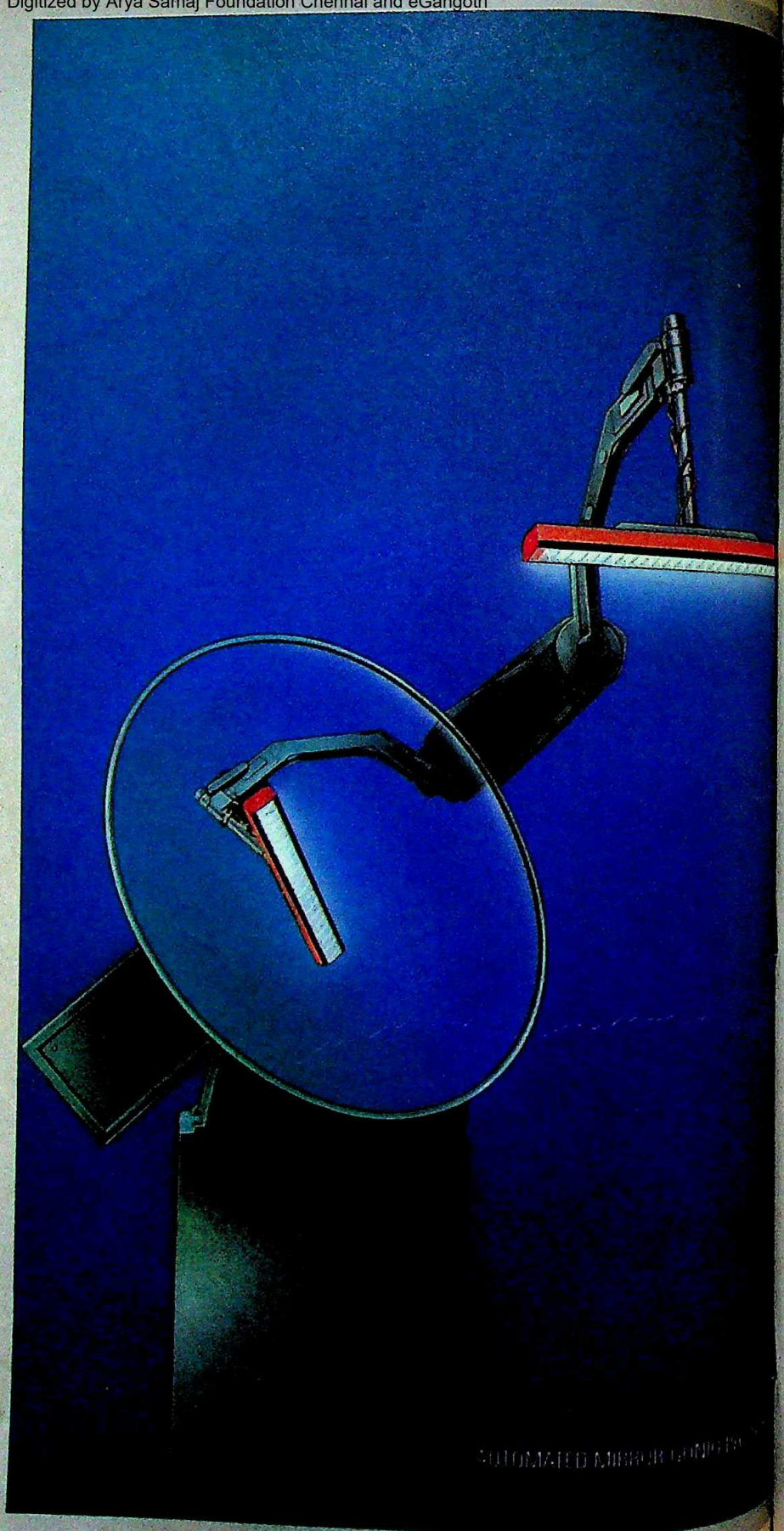
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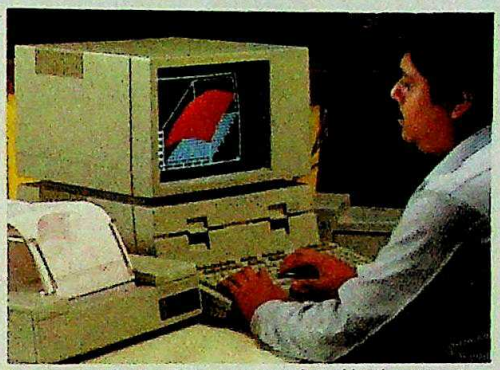


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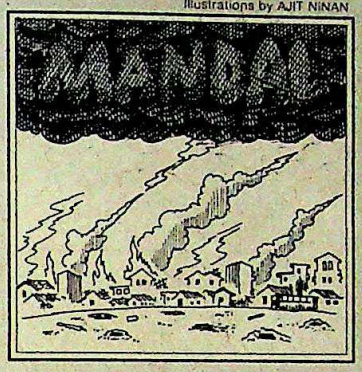
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A Flawed Approach

Illustrations by AJIT NINAN



VISHWANATH Pratap Singh's exit, many hoped, would bury Mandal. Wishful thinking.

Mandal is alive and well and living in the manifestos and public pronouncements of all parties across the political spectrum. They criticise either the "hasty" way in which Singh implemented the report, or talk vaguely of applying "economic criteria". But they dare not oppose it. They duck a national debate on the merits of the issue.

Even if Mandal's methodology—by his own admission—in determining who are economically backward castes was faulty and a new economic means test ought to be introduced, how will this system work? Will all below the ever-changing poverty line qualify? Will the beneficiaries be families? Individuals? Upper caste poor? Lower caste poor? Certifying those who "qualify" would be both an administrative and logistical nightmare. And bribery and corruption will multiply.

This approach side-tracks the real debate: are reservations really the way to achieve overall economic and social improvement for the have-nots? Or are there other means to the same end without institutionalising caste and causing divisive upheavals in society?

The Mandal approach is flawed: it is a quickfix for doling out a few thousand jobs. It will not solve unemployment or lead to a greater social mobility. Forty years of job reservations for Scheduled Castes have done little to improve their plight. Mandal will simply give a vested property right in government jobs to certain castes who will corner power to perpetuate a caste-based spoils system.

That this already exists in the states is no justification for it to be implemented at the Centre. Reservations were implemented in the south, Uttar Pradesh, Gujarat, and Bihar amidst major violence. But there is no proof that reservations have resulted in amelioration of backwardness. And as different castes simply bought their way into the reservations structure by declaring themselves backward, the system continued beyond the 10-year time limit that needs to be enforced.

The answer lies in renewing reservations at the state levels, while guaranteeing equal access to education and jobs to all communities under supervision of administrative commissions empowered to punish any person or organisation that discriminates against anybody on account of caste or religion. This would not show immediate results in official statistics, but together with the right policies for more rapid economic development aimed at expanding the job market, it would be a step in the right direction. There are no shortcuts to fundamental reform and social justice.

Keep Politicians Out



THE BJP-VHP march to Ayodhya for the kar sewa is over. Blood has flowed. Uttar Pradesh is just about limping back to a shadow of its normal self. But the tension with all its potential for another violent flashpoint still remains. And the controversy is not abating.

But there are lessons and, perhaps, even solutions. The nation must face some brutal facts. First, this metaphysical conflict does not seem destined for a legal solution. It is so deeply ingrained in the psychic fabric of mythology, of imagination, of the existential well-being of both Hindus and Muslims that neither will abide by a court verdict. Second, in a conflict of faith versus state, administrative responses can at best be stopgap measures. It is becoming obvious that it is not state, but faith that must talk directly to faith. In an atmosphere of religious calm rather than frenzy.

If the Vishwa Hindu Parishad is honest in its contention that the mandir-masjid dispute is not a political issue but rather a matter of religious pride and sentiment, then it must, in what is the noblest tradition in all religions—accommodation, understanding, compassion—confer directly with the leadership of the Babri Masjid Action Committee or other Muslim leaders and negotiate an honourable solution. And if the nation's Muslim leaders mean what they say, that they can understand the Hindu sentiment to build a Rama temple, but not at the expense of damage to the mosque, then they too must do the same.

If Hinduism is the inspiration from which flows love for the nation, then so is Islam which preaches total loyalty to the nation in which its adherents have chosen to live. The continuing damage that this controversy is doing to the nation and its stability does neither religion any pride. All it does is give politicians more and more grist for their vote banks. In any direct talks, the first principle should be: keep the damned politicians out!

In such a de-politicised atmosphere Hindu and Muslim antagonists will have to then sit down and reason together, to be able to work out an architectural compromise that would enshrine Rama's birthplace—the *garbagriha*—in the temple even as it continues to preserve the essential integrity of the mosque.

The spirit of accommodation, should it materialise, should be carried forward in a continuing dialogue between the two communities. The VHP and BJP will have to abandon their plans for demolishing other mosques to build temples. If they do not they will justly be accused of cynical religious adventurism at the cost of nation-building.

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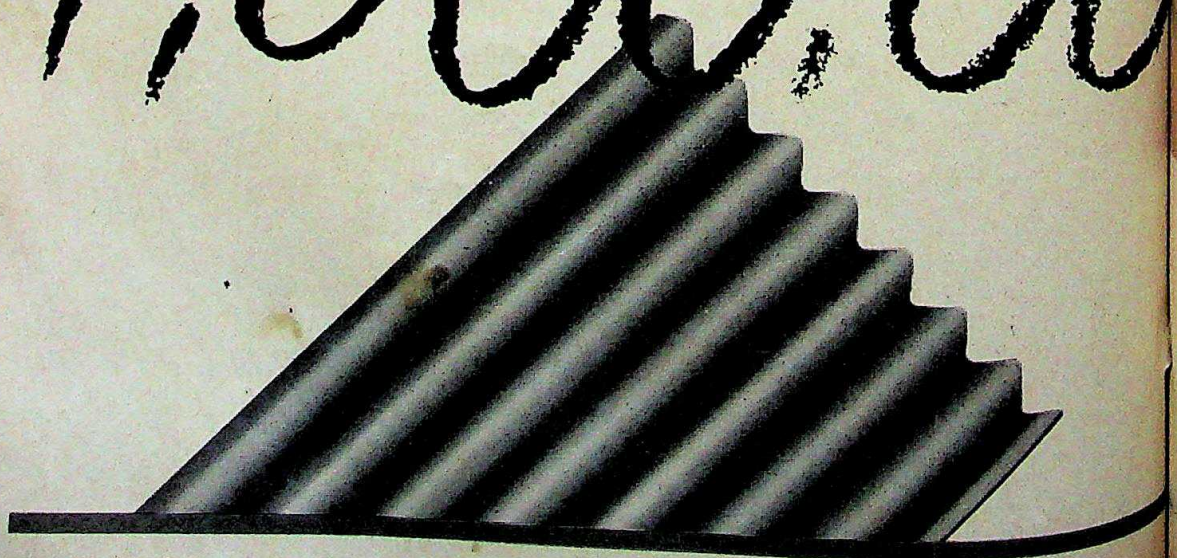
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"Thank God for someone like her"

She loves me for my hardworking ways.

She also fights because of them.

She likes my getting ahead in life and the presents I get her.

She dislikes the demands made upon me and my time.

It's not that she doesn't understand, but I guess it gets too much for her. (And there's little I can do about it).

She gives me tips to stay healthy and look good. She also hates the looks others give me.

She even sees to it that I don't suffer from the problems normally associated with someone like me. High-cholesterol, hyperacidity, gas and indigestion.

You know it's because of those two Garlic Pearls she gives me everyday.

I often wonder what I'd do without her.

And whenever someone compares me with friends my age, I silently thank God for a wife like her.

But she always says.

"Thanks to Garlic Pearls"



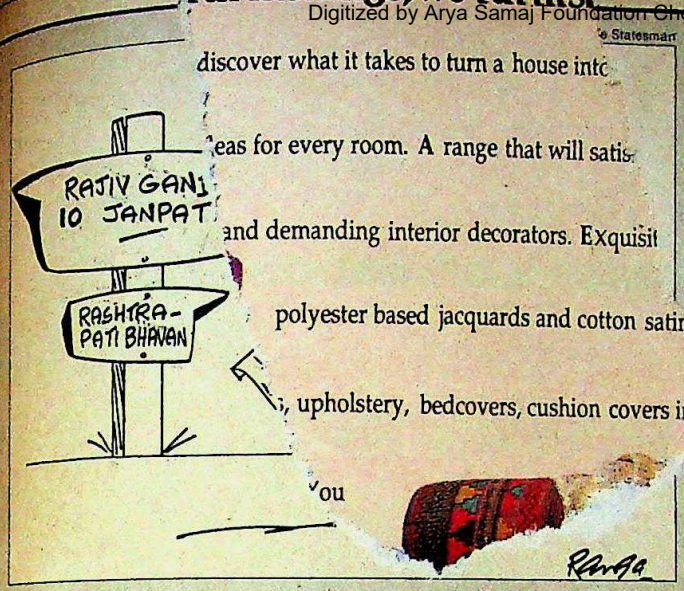
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GARLIC PEARLS

EASY-TO-GET GARLIC GOODNESS

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• *Chandra Shekhar has spine.*

■ DEVI LAL at the swearing-in ceremony of the Union cabinet

• *If the Congress(I) supports me, socialism will go a long way.*

■ CHANDRA SHEKHAR in *The Telegraph*

• *The privileged class pounced on me when I tried to disturb the economic, political or the social status quo. Their anger is not against me but against the cause.*

■ V.P. SINGH in *The Independent*

• *Hypocrisy has become the hallmark of Indian politics.*

■ YASHWANT SINHA, Union finance minister, in *The Sunday Observer*

• *The BJP respects secularism and we have put secularism in proper perspective.*

■ L.K. ADVANI at a public meeting

• *Uttar Pradesh is India and my India is Uttar Pradesh.*

■ MULAYAM SINGH YADAV, Uttar Pradesh chief minister, at a press conference

• *The Rajiv Gandhi government had stability minus respectability, the V.P. Singh government had respectability minus stability, but the Chandra Shekhar Government has neither respectability nor stability.*

■ S. JAIPAL REDDY, Janata Dal spokesman

• *I cannot work with these people who have no principles.*

■ JYOTI BASU, West Bengal chief minister on turning down Chandra Shekhar's offer of the prime ministership

• *I returned because the country is in great danger.... It was sheer disgust that drove me away from the country.*

■ FAROOQ ABDULLAH, former Jammu & Kashmir chief minister, in *The Times of India*

• *Since the lady is more capable of building a home there must be a switch-over from the office to the house.*

■ RANGANATH MISRA, chief justice of India, addressing a women's conference in New Delhi

• *You know what went wrong with my career? My talent. It went against me.*

■ SONU WALIA in *Cine Blitz*

• *I think it's difficult for a successful woman to have a natural, contented personal life.*

■ APARNA SEN in *Sunday Mail*

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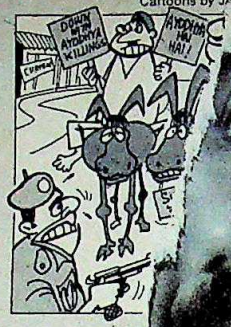
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DONKEY DEALINGS



■ Protest marches have become the new rage. And in order to draw attention to their particular demonstration, people have begun organising unusual rallies.

Consider for example, two enterprising gentlemen who organised a protest rally in Thane in Maharash-

eets, in open disregard of e curfew imposed in the uburb. The police did not ake kindly to this blatant iolation of prohibitory or- lers and swung into action, arresting the agitators— brayers, beasts and all.

When last heard of, the leaders were trying to absolve themselves by pinning the blame on the donkeys.

TV TEMPTATIONS

■ The convenient working hours and long summer holidays apart, it is the promise of accommodation which entices many to academia. However in Goa, it appears that a house is not enticement enough.

Administrators at the university there, despite ev-

ery effort, hav
suade teacher
their newly built
The reluctance apparent
stems from the fact that the houses are situated in the wilds of the Taleigao plateau, far from the civilisation of Panaji. In desperation, the authorities have decided to bait the lecturers into the wilderness with the



offer of remote-controlled colour TV sets.

However, students feel that a shuttle service linking the campus to the city would be a more effective, and cheaper incentive, and would benefit them as well.

The teachers meanwhile expectantly wait to see if the stakes are going to be upped some more.

FIRED UP

■ Drinking on duty has been prohibited since time immemorial and perhaps with good reason. So discovered two firemen working in the capital city.

Late last fortnight, these two fire fighters were asked to rush to an area that was being consumed by flames.



However, being in a state of inebriation they misunderstood the order and drove the fire tender in the opposite direction.

Finally the fire engine found its way to Asaf Ali Road from where they called the station to report that they had lost their way. They were given fresh instuction but the tipsy two-

some, still in high spirits were in no state of mind to follow instructions and landed up near the Red Fort.

By the time they stumbled upon the site of the fire, guided by local residents, the spot had been gutted. Now the fire fighters find themselves stoking the domestic fires and perusing their suspension orders.

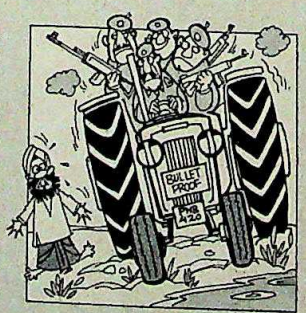
TRACTOR TACTICS

■ Its high profile has made the bullet-proof jacket a status-symbol. But the Punjab Police have taken this fad to a new limit.

Recently they decided to buy 50 tractors. It was strange enough that the police wanted to acquire farm-

ing equipment. Worse still was their claim that they would be bullet-proof.

The idea first occurred to them two months ago, after having successfully used tractors in an encounter with extremists. Ensconced in an irrigated field, the terrorists were out of reach of security forces. Eventually



two tractors, carrying commandos of the NSG, weeded out the killers.

Made for the police, these high-security tractors would be ideal in marshy situations, where other vehicles are rendered useless.

The protectors of public order can then say that they plough a deadly furrow.

GOLD RUSH

■ He had a golden smile. And he was a popular and happy 52-year-old leading a peaceful life in the south Kerala town of Varkala.

The thieves of the town decided to deprive him of the crucial elements that helped him flash that glittering



smile—two prominent gold teeth. Last fortnight they jumped him in the dark and set about extracting the teeth with pincers.

Soon Golden-Teeth was not only short of a couple of his masticators, but also his wrist watch. It was while they were making a grab for his wedding ring that he managed to slip away. But before he turned the corner, he did not forget to turn back and flash that golden smile once again.

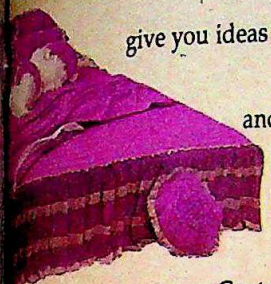
That wiped the smiles off the thieves' faces: they had pulled out the wrong teeth. The deprived gent may now be forced to get himself another two golden beauties.

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Art

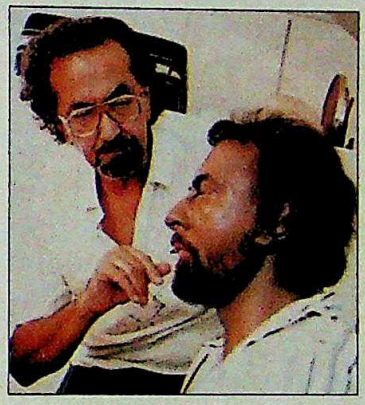
MANJIT BAWA (The Taj, Bombay). Call a Nandi bull by any other name and it still remains a Nandi bull. But a painter of Manjit Bawa's competence should go beyond such simple animistic portraiture. Art promoter Ashish Nagpal's auction in Bombay of Bawa's bulls, tigers and the firebrand Maneka Gandhi with a dog (bought by actor Anupam Kher for a fanciful Rs 2.40 lakh) sought to raise money for an ambulance for animals. The auction was teeming with gawking glitterati but clearly it was less than sublime art. Good causes, it would seem, make for bad art.

RAMKINKAR VAIJ (National Gallery of Modern Art, Delhi). Unsung when alive—he died in 1980—Vaij is one of the great moderns of Indian art. The retrospective of 360 of his works is a treat, especially his exquisite sculptures: his Santhal figures and the bronze representation of Gandhi's Dandi March remain etched in the mind. Vaij was a fearless pioneer: he experimented with cement, and did oils when the best of his Shantiniketan peers were tremulously doing water colours.

SATISH GUJRAL (Lalit Kala Galleries, Rabindra Bhavan, Delhi). There is a touch of the atavistic and terror-stricken in all of Satish Gujral's icons. All the same, he is also brazenly iconoclastic and his mediums of expression reflect this often blase attitude towards life. His Ganeshas are in turn wicked and benevolent, sardonic and sweet and his attempts to break down surrounding myths about the little god create a myth of his own. His Ganeshas seem to be caught in stasis, unrelenting, immobile.

Theatre

OTHELLO (Directed by Alyque Padamsee; starring Kabir Bedi and Nikki Vijayakar; Bombay). Kabir Bedi is true to form and has proved consistent once again: he's refused to shed his wooden-faced image, which says nothing much for his role as tragic Othello. The play fails because you exit admiring the sets and the costumes and nothing said about the beauty of Shakespeare's language. The saving grace is a remarkably fresh performance by English stage debutante Nikki Vijayakar as the wronged Desdemona. Her performance though tepid is rescued by her voice modulation, which swings between innocence and spontaneity. To round it off, one city theatre director says: "It is the perfect Bombay advertising product: 90 per cent confidence and 10 per cent talent."



Padamsee with Bedi

Food

MIGRANT MUTTON (NOIDA, near Delhi). This mutton did not grow legs and start to walk. It's a catering cooperative born out of desperation. Recently formed by women refugees from Kashmir, it even has home delivery. The cuisine is mouthwatering, if a bit on the high side. Kashmiri refugees have also floated a restaurant, Wazwan, in south Delhi's Defence Colony. The days of refugee cuisine seem to have arrived and not a bit too late.

SCOOPS (Calcutta). A brainchild of Pradeep Wig of Kwality ice-cream fame, Scoops opened on October 28 with much fanfare. It boasts of an Italian chef, Max Massimo, and offers 56 different varieties of ice-cream. Further, claims Wig: "This is the first time in India that authentic Italian pizzas made in authentic Italian ovens will be sold." But then, who wants pizzas if you can put ice on the smackeroo? Scoops *a la Latino*.

CHOR BIZARRE (Delhi). This eclectic eatery trades in on the nostalgia for the Hindi film music of the '50s and the '60s. But its decor can be unsettling, even insanity cultivated. The dishes and the surroundings are totally mismatched—you could end up eating off a four-poster bed, while a maroon vintage automobile bang in the centre of the room pretends to be a salad bar. As a saving grace, this is probably the only place in the capital where you can have genuine *Dilli ki chaat* minus the germs.

JUST DESSERTS (Bombay). Launched last month, this little nocturnal indulgence works out of the premises of the Parisian Restaurant, an eatery on Homi Mody Street. Open after 9 p.m. every night, it is an opiate's den for those with sweet teeth. The menu comprises pastries, coffee and blasting jazz. Just Desserts caters to a whole new clientele, *cafe au lait* buffs and jazz aficionados.

Books

DECEPTION by Philip Roth (Simon and Schuster; Rs 280). Portnoy and Zuckerman's creator sticks to his favourite literary preoccupation: sex. This time it's all adulterous, and all in dialogue. A self-indulgent book; far from his best.

OCTAVIO PAZ: SELECTED POEMS (Penguin; Rs 142). Poetry of nuances and essences from the Nobel laureate. With lots of India: Elefanta to Utacamud (sic), replete with Shiva, beggars, and mindless buffaloes. Great cadence, imagery; but surreal. Not for those who like their poetry straight.

Music

SOMEONE SOMEWHERE: by Jagjit and Chitra Singh. (HMV; Rs 31). This cassette consisting of eight songs is dedicated to their son Vivek, who died in an accident in July this year, when he was barely 18. Vivek apparently helped to hone their numbers, but this cassette lacks finish. It is too funereal. An epitaph like this should pass into legend but this is simply too maudlin.

Movies

KAMLA KI MAUT (Directed by Basu Chatterjee; starring Pankaj Kapoor, Supriya Pathak, Rupa Ganguly). An unusual film which would have gained much with better characterisation. Kamla, unmarried but pregnant, attracts the taunts of neighbours, commits suicide. As it turns out, each neighbour too has had a dark sexual experience. Apparently, the adult treatment of an adult subject has kept Doordarshan from telecasting it. But available on video.

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CHANDRA SHEKHAR

Playing The Double Game



Prime Minister Chandra Shekhar in

By INDERJIT BADHWAR
and PRABHU CHAWLA

BY all political reason and logic, he's on a fast track to nowhere, pedalling furiously in place. Nobody knows for sure whether his government will last a month, a year. Least of all Chandra Shekhar.

Notwithstanding these uncertainties, Chandra Shekhar has begun to go about his job as if the premiership of India was his manifest destiny and he is playing for keeps.

He believes that there's no such thing as shame in politics. The very day that he was given the green light by President R. Venkataraman to form a government he dashed to Rajiv Gandhi's house to ask for active association. It did not bother him when the wags chorused *"Bhondsi ka baba bhiksha mangne ja raha hai."* (The hermit of Bhondsi has taken out his begging bowl.)

The spectacle of a prime minister crisscrossing the capital in a frenzied bid to win friends and influence people would have amused even a Dale Carnegie. When he needs allies for his own designs Chandra Shekhar does not summon people to his well-guarded office-residence. Like Mohammed, he prefers to go to the mountain. And indeed, there were many political mountains to which he journeyed during his first week in office. Often without notice. These included BJP President L.K. Advani, Vijaya Raje Scindia, former presidents Giani Zail Singh and N. Sanjeeva Reddy, and even V.P. Singh. And he added a dash of mystery to his political peregrinations by calling on detractors like press baron Ram Nath Goenka and RSS leaders.

His style is a textbook contrast in opposites when compared with V.P. Singh. Where the former prime minister would reply in embarrassed non sequiturs when questioned about his political ambitions, Chandra Shekhar takes the query about his overweening ambition to become prime minister head on. "So what?" he says, "what's wrong with that ambition?" In fact he's the master of the rhetorical "so what". "So what?" if he meets Dhirubhai Ambani, or Chandraswami.

In his new image, as he hits the public relations circuit, attending private dinners with industrialists in a symbolic adieu to his oft-professed socialism, Chandra Shekhar is the unrestrained back-slapper with the full-throated laugh. And he blends with a brand of five-star populism: insisting on serving his Special Protection Group bodyguard a plate of food at a dinner party; mingling freely with the press at a televised press conference on an airplane flight, his rustic dhoti flowing in the aisles.

He knows that initially he needs all the help he can get and from wherever he can find it, no questions asked. So long as it was a question of my enemy's enemy is my friend during the toppling of V.P. Singh, it was easy for Chandra Shekhar to carry his faction-ridden Janata Dal(S) and the Congress(I) with him. But good public relations is not everything. For now the tough part begins.

The strangest combination of characters—Rajiv Gandhi, Chimanbhai Patel, Mulayam Singh Yadav, Sharad Pawar, and Devi Lal—was the force behind Chandra Shekhar's ascent to the premiership. And when the time for cabinet-making arrived, it was their turn to ask for their pounds of flesh.

It called for a dextrous weaving of illusions by the Gogia Pasha of Indian politics: how to safeguard his interests while appearing not to be annoying his co-conspirators and allies.

And nowhere was this more evident than in the making of his cabinet. The general feeling was that he would never be able to put a cabinet together and that his rump group would simply collapse for failure to establish a council of ministers. The pressures on him from his allies for inclusion and exclusion of candidates was enormous. He went through the motions of deferring to their interests but then took them for the ride they are not likely to forget that easily.

The Ballia Rajput's double-edged sword was out of its scabbard and smiting skilfully. In the process of forming his ministry Chandra Shekhar, to the deep chagrin of those who supported him, demonstrated that he is still an adept practitioner of the double-con. He went through an elaborate exercise of consultations, obtained the consent of his allies on general principles, leading them to believe that their candidates were being considered, and then pulled the rug out from under their feet.

Gujarat Chief Minister Chimanbhai Patel, one of the most important kingmakers, was the first to be lulled into playing Chandra Shekhar's game. Chandra Shekhar went out of his way to accord him the kind of importance he had rarely before experienced and making him believe that he was really calling the shots. Special BSF and Haryana Government planes were placed at the

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f the 32 ministers he announced, 20 e hardcore Chandra Shekhar loyal- —his core group. He had already ecided that none of the sensitive portfo- would go to any other faction. While placated his deputy prime minister evi Lal by conceding the high- rofile tourism portfolio so essen- to the smooth completion of hautala's Disneyland project, refused to surrender any other t to his dep- laims to



Shekhar in Block office: trying to play for keeps

s cabinet. The e would never ether and that mply collapse a council o him from his exclusion o us. He went erring to their m for the ride et that easily double-edged cabbard and ocess of forma- Shekhar, to ho supported he is still an ouble-con. He te exercise of e consent of iples, leading r candidates d then pulled eir feet. Chimanbhai portant king- e lulled into ar's game of his way to portance by ed and mak- really calling nd Haryana placed at the

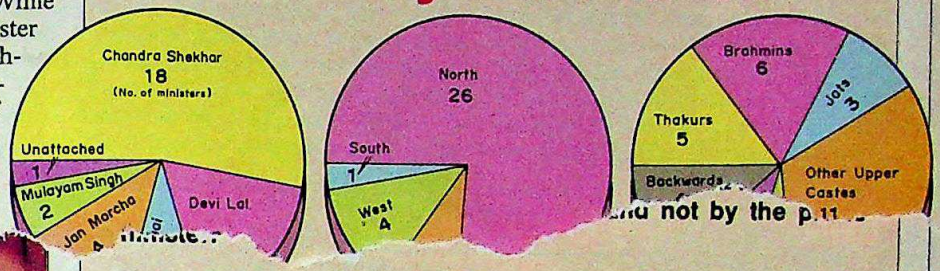
sposal of the portly chief minister to ry him between Ahmedabad and ew Delhi for consultations.

IN fact, in what was a monumental ego-booster for Patel, Chandra Shekhar insisted that the cabinet-rmation midnight parleys be con- cted not in the prime minister's office t rather at Gujarat Bhawan. True to s style, Chandra Shekhar drove down Gujarat Bhawan, hardly a kilometre ay from his residence for a meeting tended by Patel, Yashwant Sinha, Om rkash Chautala and Mulayam Singh adav who was asked to fly to Delhi at ght after having won the no-confi- ence vote in Lucknow in the evening. They realised the next morning that Shekhar and his hard core supporters d walked away with the biggest unk of the ministerial cake. Impor- nt followers of Devi Lal and Yadav re left out in the cold with a vague surance that they would be accom- dated in a later instalment. How had Chandra Shekhar done this?

By a deft combination of the illusion consultations and vague assurances, managed to obtain his allies' consent a few specific names but left the rtfolios and the status of the ministers be appointed open.

Then he struck secretly and silently.

Anatomy of a Council



...nd not by the p...

- I am against certain large industrial houses if they indulge in malpractices but because of that I do not begin to hate industrialists.

- Mr Dhirubhai among the industrialists is not the worst criminal. Others are equal criminals or saints. People want me to hate Mr Dhirubhai without knowing him. Sorry I am not going to oblige....

- Money morality is only important in the jargon of the hypocrites. All of us in politics are getting money which is black money.

- Chandraswamy is my friend not from today but from the days of Mrs Indira Gandhi.

- I do not want to conceal from anybody that cabinet formation is for me a difficult task because very few people are available.

- In many cases solutions do not come for centuries, so I cannot claim that I am definitely going to solve these (Kashmir, Punjab and Assam) problems.

- Multinationals have a track record of increasing corruption wherever they go.

- Surya Deo Singh's (Dhanbad coal mafia don) family comes from my district. No charge against him has been proved. I have helped him to do no wrong. So, why should I disown a person on the strength of some unsubstantiated charges?

- I can be anything but a puppet.

- In politics, there are no permanent friends or foes.

- Politicians go on accusing the bureaucracy because they have no clear vision about the future. I think you cannot find a better bureaucracy than the Indian bureaucracy.

- Reservation on the caste lines cannot be done away with totally.

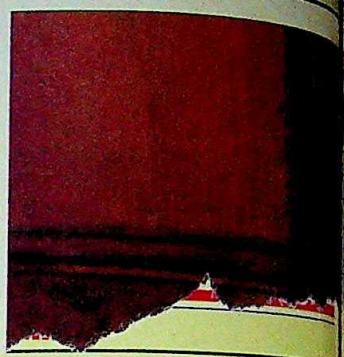
- The Congress leadership has a past on Punjab. I do not have one. So that may be the difference.

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CHANDRA SHEKHAR

Playing The Double Game



NAME AND AGE	MINISTRY	FACTION	PARTIES REP.**	STATE & CASTE	BACK-GROUND	BEST KNOWN FOR	PERSONALITY TRAITS
Chandra Shekhar, 63, PM	Defence, Home, I&B, Industry, others	Himself	Five	UP, Thakur	Rural	Padyatra and opposing every PM	Ambitious, volatile and rebellious
Devi Lal, 76, Deputy PM	Agriculture and Tourism	Himself	Eight	Rajasthan, Jat	Rural	Dole and clan politics	Egoistic, gullible, a good organiser
Vidya Charan Shukla, 61	External Affairs	Former Jan Morcha	Four	MP, Brahmin	Urban	Role as I&B minister during Emergency	Urbane, soft-spoken, loves the good life
Subramaniam Swamy, 52	Commerce and Law & Justice	Chandra Shekhar	Three	UP, Brahmin	Urban	Muckraking and Emergency escape	Articulate, schemer, acerbic
Yashwant Sinha, 53	Finance	Chandra Shekhar	Two	Bihar, Kayastha	Urban	Telegenic Janata Dal spokesman	Affable, suave, accommodating
Janeshwar Mishra, 53	Railways	Mulayam Singh Yadav	Seven	UP, Brahmin	Mofussil	Going to jail 30 times against Congress misrule	Serious, loves speech-making and good food
Raj Mangal Pande, 70	Human Resources Development	Former Jan Morcha	Five	UP, Brahmin	Urban	Effective meal-ticket distributor	Aggressive, pedantic, enjoys flattery
Hukumdeo Narayan Yadav, 52	Textile and Food Processing	Chandra Shekhar	Seven	Bihar, Backward	Rural	Socialist rhetoric	Fiery speaker, rustic, frugal habits
Kalyan Singh Kalvi, 60	Energy	Chandra Shekhar	Five	Rajasthan, Thakur	Urban	Supporting sati custom	Docile, loyalist, good orator, hospitable
Manubhai Kotadia, 54	Water Resources and Surface Transport	Chimanbhai Patel	Three	Gujarat, Upper Caste	Urban	Cooperative mafia politics in Gujarat	Sycophant, low profile but expensive lifestyle
Daulat Ram Saran, 66	Urban Development	Devi Lal	Five	Rajasthan, Jat	Rural	Nothing	No airs, amiable, gregarious
Asoke Sen, 77	Steel and Mines	Former Jan Morcha	Four	W. Bengal, Kayastha	Urban	Being a good and expensive lawyer	Serious, loner, power hungry
Rao Birendra Singh, 69	Food & Civil Supplies	Devi Lal	Five	Haryana, Ahir	Urban	Exponent of Haryana's defection politics	Introvert, persuasive, backroom operator
Satya Prakash Malviya, 56	Petroleum and Chemicals, Parliamentary Affairs	Chandra Shekhar	Nine	UP, Brahmin	Mofussil	Asking a record number of questions against industrialists	Publicity monger
Shakeelur Rehman, 60	Health and Family Welfare	Former Jan Morcha	Four	Bihar, Muslim	Urban	Controversial tenure as Vice Chancellor in Bihar	Cultured, academic and has aristocratic lifestyle
Maneka Gandhi,* 34	Environment and Forests	None	Four	UP, Khatri	Urban	Marrying Sanjay Gandhi	Arrogant, rigid, self-righteous, determined
Sanjay Singh,* 37	Communications	Mulayam Singh Yadav	Four	UP, Thakur	Urban	Syed Modi murder controversy	Feudal outlook, aggressive, smart
Harmohan* Dhawan, 50	Civil Aviation	Chandra Shekhar	Three	Chandigarh, Khatri	Urban	Hosting lavish parties	Urbane, social, and a fixer

*Minister of State (Independent Charge) **Represented ***Average number of parties represented: 4.8

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of the 32 ministers he announced, 20 were hardcore Chandra Shekhar loyalists—his core group. He had already decided that none of the sensitive portfolios would go to any other faction. While he had replaced his deputy prime minister Devi Lal by conceding the high-profile tourism portfolio so essential to the smooth completion of Chautala's Disneyland project, he refused to surrender any other economic department to his deputy. Devi Lal had staked claims to departments like commerce, energy, industry and petroleum and the announcement of the final list found him sulking.

Chandra Shekhar made sure that all the former V.P. Singh loyalists from the erstwhile Jan Morcha who had switched over to him were accommodated in the ministry—but not in the posts they had coveted. Vidya Charan Shukla, who had wanted energy, got instead the Foreign Ministry. Jan Morcha heavyweight Raj Mangal Pande got human resources development instead of his cherished home portfolio. Sanjay Singh had wanted finance or commerce but was made to live with an independent charge of communications.

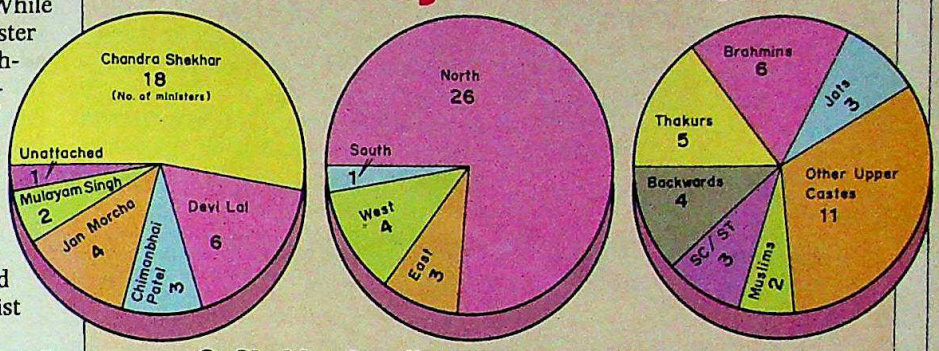
ALSO in for a surprise was Mulayam Singh Yadav whose prime nominee Janeshwar Mishra, for whom Yadav had lobbied for the home berth or at least an economic ministry, was given railways. Chief Minister Patel, who had rallied nine of Gujarat's 12 Janata Dal MPs to Chandra Shekhar's side, found himself with just one in the Union Cabinet.

Chandra Shekar had also dealt Devi Lal a strange blow. Exploiting the Tau's family feuds—sometimes Devi Lal sides with Chautala and at other times with Ranjit Singh—Chandra Shekhar included in his cabinet suggestions made by Chautala rather than those of Devi Lal. For example, he kept Jagdeep Dhankar, a successful lawyer from Rajasthan—one of the earliest to switch loyalties from V.P. Singh—and Chand Ram, a prominent Harijan leader, (both Devi Lal supporters) out of the Cabinet. Daulat Ram Saran from Rajasthan was elevated as cabinet minister, Dhankar believes this was done to cut his Jat base in Rajasthan and Haryana.

Maharashtra Chief Minister Sharad Pawar, too, was in for a rude jolt. While none of his nominees made it to the cabinet, a strong detractor of his—Balbaroo Dhakne—was made minister of state at the Centre.

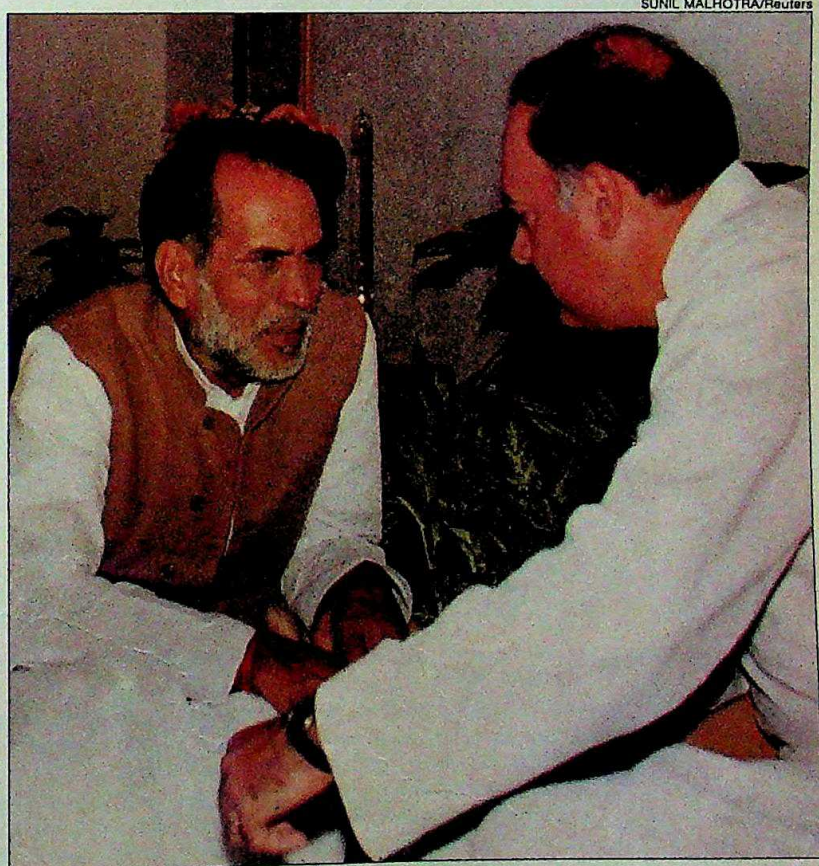
And in the process, the beggar of Bhondsi has also become a chooser not only in the way that he has dealt with his own party but also with the Congress(I). Rajiv and his party need Chandra Shekhar more than they would like to admit. Their main motivation in supporting him now is to buy and dictate time for the elections that will be advantageous to the Congress(I). For this reason they cannot afford to ditch him at a politically inconvenient time. Secondly, his followers are not exactly rootless. In fact, many of them are the same who provided V.P. Singh a powerful caste base for the Janata Dal. For example, Bhagey

Anatomy of a Council



- **Shekhar loyalists outnumber the rest**
- **North totally eclipses south, east and west**
- **The upper caste domination is complete**

SUNIL MALHOTRA/Reuters



Chandra Shekhar with Rajiv Gandhi: war of nerves

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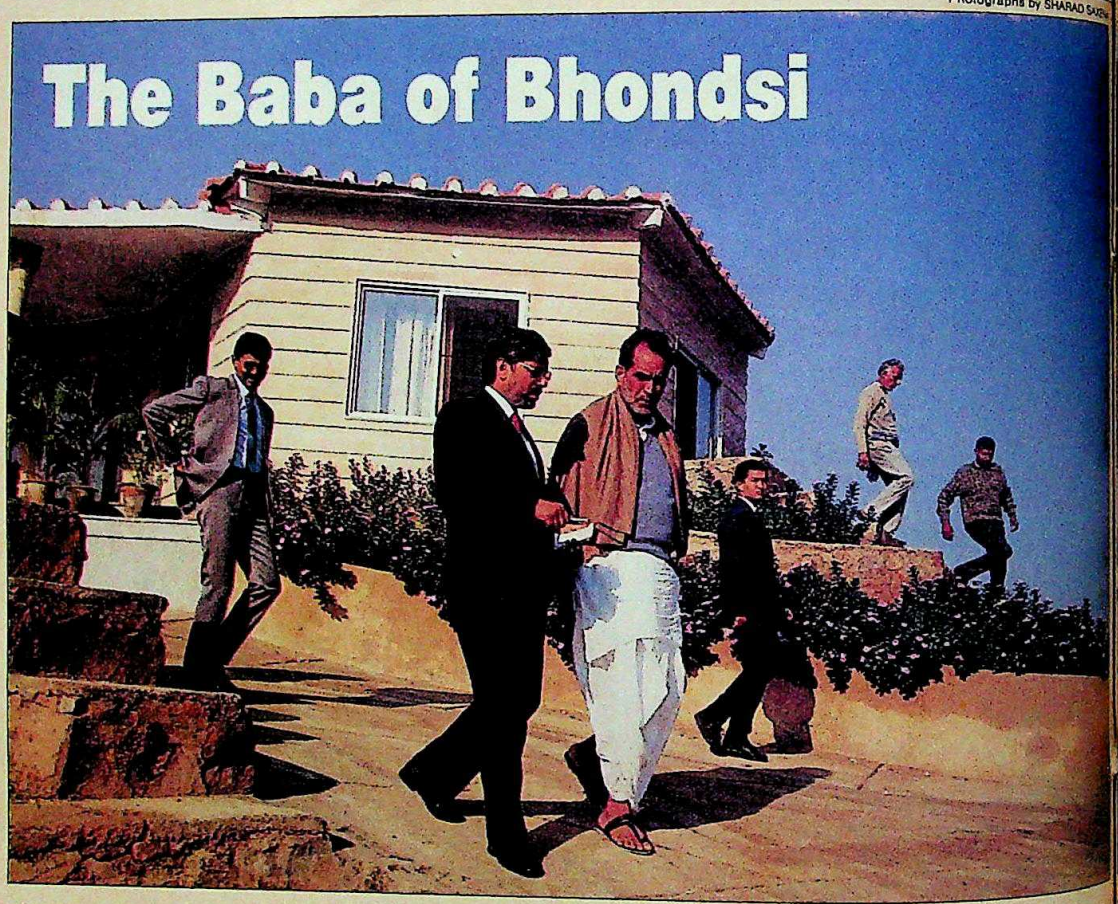
Gobardhan is an important tribal leader from Orissa. Bhakt Charan Das from the same state is a Harijan with his own following. Subodh Kant Sahay from Bihar and Hukumdeo Narayan Yadav have solid bases.

Chandra Shekhar knows this. And taking advantage of the situtation he forced some unpalatable political gruel down the Congress(I)'s throat. To prove that the puppet can also be the puppeteer, Chandra Shekhar refused to show the final list of ministers to Rajiv Gandhi and added insult to injury by including people like Vidya Charan Shukla, Sanjay Singh, Asoke Sen and Maneka Gandhi, all of them anathema to the Congress party.

And he turned the screws even tighter by forcing the Congress(I) into supporting its most implacable foe in Uttar Pradesh—Mulayam Singh Yadav. The prime minister made a commitment to Rajiv Gandhi that he would force the Uttar Pradesh chief minister to accept some of the Congress(I) face-saving demands as part of the formula for bailing out the state Government. Despite strong protests from the Uttar Pradesh Congress(I) leadership, Rajiv

Photographs by SHARAD SAXENA

The Baba of Bhondsi



Chandra Shekhar with Gautam and securitymen at his Bhondsi farmhouse: idyllic retreat

WHEN Chandra Shekhar walked into Parliament for the first time in 1962, the predominant feeling in his mind was that he was an inferior being. "The talk was only about decor and tapestry and my inferiority complex only grew. I had it for a very long time," he says.

Today, almost dazed, he sits in the highest seat of the land. The ornate and the fashionable don't bother him any longer. He's at home in their midst. And confident: "I've realised that they are not superior. Now, I pity them."

What is this man all about? The village bumpkin from Ballia, the first matriculate from Ibrahimpatti! What is Chandra Shekhar minus the politician? "I am ordinary. A human being," says he. He laughs, he screams. He shouts. And cries too.

He cried when he got married at 14, still in class nine. His wife Duija Devi was just 10. "She is my wife, a lovely person. But we share little in common. She's not a companion and I hate the social system for that," he says.

He cried in pain when a village quack dug a barber's knife into his thigh to remove an abscess. Two people held his arms and two his legs and while one held back his head, he screamed and yelled as the knife twisted and turned. "I survived," says he, "despite being laid up in bed for three months. The mark is there."

It seems to have left a deep impression. He is possessed with the idea of taking medical care to distant villages. His mother died of cholera in their remote village, 70 km from the nearest hospital. He vowed then that he would build a hospital at the village.

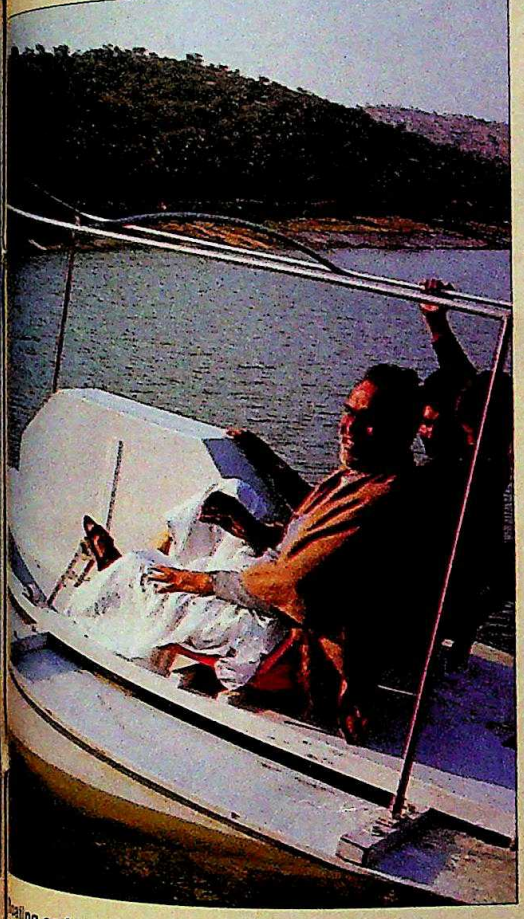
The hospital at Ibrahimpatti—whose foundation-stone

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...in line and ordered the local ...ngress(I) MLAs to support Yadav. ...ile Yadav won, there were no indica... ...s whether he would concede any of ...Congress(I) demands such as allow... ...the construction of a temple at the ...nyas site at Ayodhya. Yadav is also ...king to his guns on reservations (the ...ngress(I) is demanding that the issue ...reviewed).

And the prime minister, who had earlier criticised his predecessor for adopting an uncompromisingly tough posture, was maintaining silence on Yadav's defiant mood. In fact, both the Central and the state governments appeared to be gearing up for a bigger show of state power against the kar sewaks. Subodh Kant Sahay, the prime minister's protege and union minister of state for home, made a public announcement in New Delhi that kar sewa would not be allowed on December 6. And Sahay—without taking Yadav into confidence—had begun consultations with the same set of Muslim amd Hindu leaders to reach a settlement. Yadav had been furious with V.P. Singh for consulting with the VHP behind his back, and now that his ally Chandra Shekhar is



...ating on his lake: rustic pleasures

...s laid by JayaprakashNarayan—is still under construc... ...n (for lack of funds, he says). But there is a dispensary at ...sprawling farmhouse lawns in Bhondsi in Gurgaon. "He ...t see a poor man sick. If he spots one amongst the ...gers who come to see him everyday, he immediately ...ort them off to a hospital or drives them there himself," ...s C.B. Gautam, his personal secretary of 14 years.

He is still most comfortable with villagers, sitting with ...em on the *chattai* and chatting in Bhojpuri over meals. ...e food too is Bhojpuri: dal, sabzi, roti and rice. His food ...its haven't changed over the years. "It's potatoes I'm ...d of, though I know I shouldn't eat them." No non-...etarian cuisine. Not any more. He went off chicken eight ...ears ago, for as he says, "I've never understood why, but ...ch time I used to eat chicken, *mujhe murga nazar aata tha.*" Fish he's never liked—he can't stand the smell.

He doesn't stop the villagers from fishing in his farmhouse lake. The controversial 45-acre farmhouse is built over land donated by the gram panchayat (so say his followers) and constructed by money donated to him in the course of his Kanyakumari-to-Rajghat padyatra. His critics scoff and talk of his business connections.

THE farmhouse is Chandra Shekhar's retreat, a place to escape from foes and critics. He lived there earlier, but now as prime minister, he visits the place only on week-ends. To walk over the grass he himself planted. Sit in a paddle boat and drift across the lake. Or watch the falling rain, only watch, for he hates getting wet in it. He also hates the winter cold.

Whenever he is here, he stops next to the statue of a garlanded donkey constructed near a temple. For Chandra Shekhar, the donkey is the symbol of labour. "He said, if people can worship all kinds of gods, why can't I worship the *gadha*. It's the donkeys who worked for five long years with me to make Bhondsi a reality," Gautam recalls.

Yet, the prime minister is not a religious man. ("I don't even know any prayer.") Godmen? Well, that's a different issue with the omnipresent Chandraswami for a friend. "I don't know why my associations bother others. I have nothing to conceal. For the first time in my life, I find I have something to hide—secrets of the Government," he laughs.

He's proud of his friends. They're mostly political-minded but not politicians and include Subir Ahmed, his barber since 1962. "When I was in jail during the Emergency, he went home to my family. None of my political colleagues did," he reminisces.

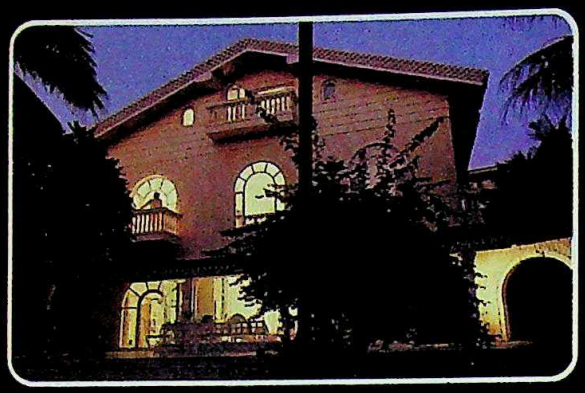
He strolls through the farm with old servants and assistants on a 3-km gravel path past narrow wooden bridges and culverts. "Nature gives me inner strength," he says. He loves sitting in a train or driving in a car. "You can't see anything in an aircraft," he complains.

Says his attractive daughter-in-law, Rashmi: "At home he is a no-fuss man. A man without frills. I can serve him cold food and he won't say a word. Neither does he complain if I don't pack enough clothes into his suitcase." She's waiting for the day he wears his *bandgala* suit again so she can take a photograph. He's only worn it once in Europe when it was much too cold.

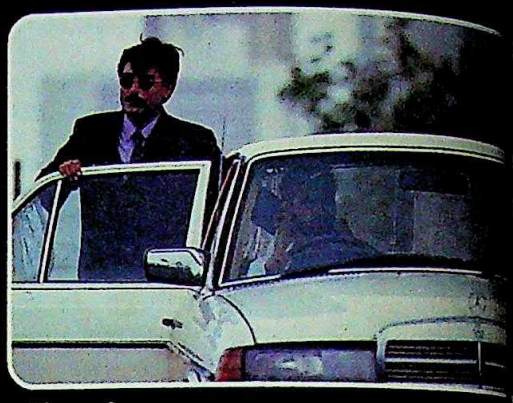
They see more of his photographs than the man. Retiring as he does, at 1.30 a.m and waking up at five. Up and out, before the household is awake. Back to his meetings and lunches. Back to the world of political intrigue and prices and Mandal. Quite far from the get-away-from-it-all week-ends at Bhondsi.

—HARINDER BAWEJA

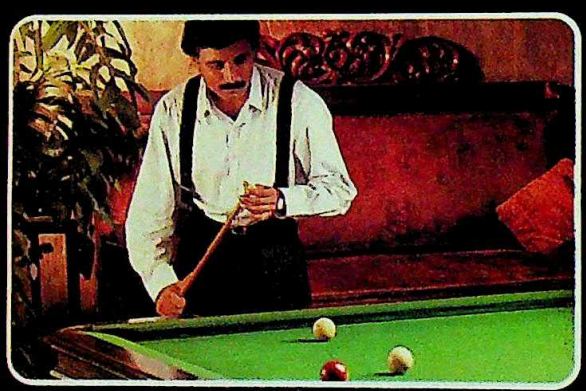
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His House



His Car



His Game

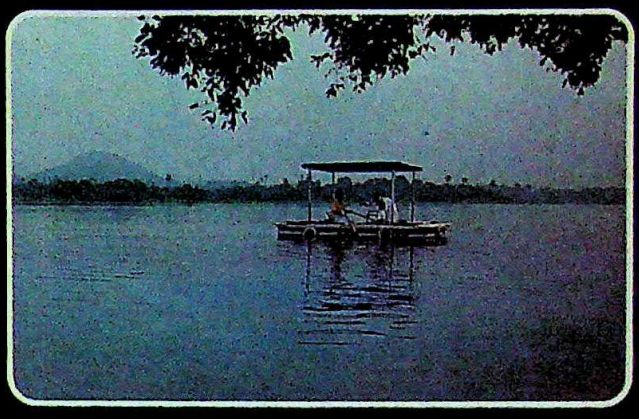


His Pet

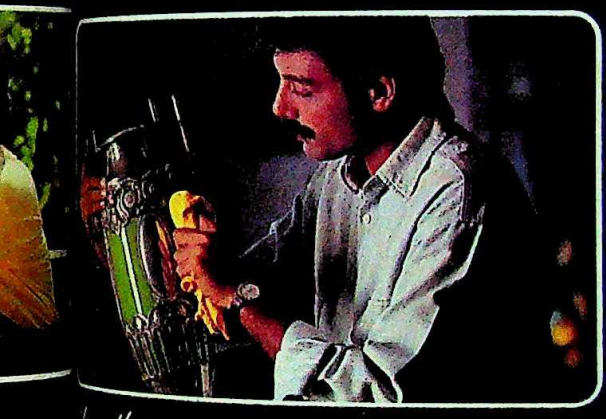
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His Evening



His Holiday



His Hobby



His Card

CITIBANK DINERS CLUB

The Rewards of Success

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CONGRESS(I) SORE POINTS



SANJAY SINGH



MANEKA GANDHI



V.C. SHUKLA

Chandra Shekhar added insult to Congress(I) injury by including those who were anathema to the party.

ANGRY REJECTS



CHAND RAM



J. DHANKAR



RANJIT SINGH

The prime minister consolidated his position by keeping out those who belonged to other factions.

doing the same thing he is quietly seething again.

Chandra Shekhar's strategy is to keep everybody confused about whether he is being used by others or is using them. But a backlash is already developing both within his party and in the Congress(I). Rajiv Gandhi has issued strict instructions to partymen to keep silent on issues on which Chandra Shekhar begins to take the flak rather than defend him in public. He did not attend the swearing-in ceremony of the Cabinet and was visibly absent from a dinner hosted by the prime minister on November 15 for 50 Congress(I) MPs. Chandra Shekhar is using the admittedly risky tactic of needling the Congress(I) to just the right extent—a game of brinkmanship in which the Congress(I) feels uncomfortable but not quite ready to abandon support. But that's a dangerous game, for given Rajiv's reputation for impetuousness he could just break off the arrangement in a fit of temper.

AND for the Congress(I) there's an added cause for worry. The longer it continues to support Chandra Shekhar, the greater is the electoral headstart that it gives to its foes, V.P. Singh and the BJP, who have already hit the campaign trail while the Congress(I) fiddles uncertainly at the Centre.

Also in Chandra Shekhar's own party there were strong protests from factional loyalists and from backward and Harijan MPs. Deputy minister Dasai Choudhry even made public his resentment threatening to quit if he was not elevated to cabinet rank. The dissidents received active support from Devi Lal's younger son Ranjit Singh whose followers were mauled by his elder brother Chautala in the race for ministerships. Ranjit Singh was himself expecting a cabinet berth at the Centre. Denied this, he held a meeting of 10 dissident MPs at the residence of Chand Ram and decided to register a protest with the prime minister.

Chandra Shekhar for the time being may have been able to placate the Tau by being solicitous of Chautala's demands. But now the pressure is

HISTORY... OF SORTS

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OF COURSE, the record for being in power with the least number of party MPs in the Lok Sabha is indisputably his.

ALSO, he is the first prime minister who could not constitute his council of ministers for over 10 days after being sworn-in.

ANOTHER FIRST: Only Cabinet since Independence in which not a single Harijan has been inducted as a cabinet rank minister.

NEVER BEFORE has the prime minister's swearing-in taken place in the open lawns of Rashtrapati Bhawan.

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The Rewards of Success

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mounting on Devi Lal from his own supporters. They are constantly reminding him that he had been critical of V.P. Singh for ignoring the interests of rural folk. But in the new dispensation, they point out that 25 of the new ministers are urbanites and they've been given a raw deal.

These pressures can only mount. Ultimately, no amount of doublecross, manoeuvres and counter-manoeuvres can hide the stark reality of numbers. A bare 20 people breaking away from his own party can topple him. So, he faces the same insecurity as V.P. Singh. He is at the mercy of Devi Lal and forces outside his party.

Chandra Shekhar knows this. But he is also working to a gameplan of his own. He manipulated his way to the top not just to fulfil his lifetime obsession of becoming prime minister, if only for some time, but also with a longer-range perspective. By basking in the national limelight and projecting the image of being prime ministerial he hopes to widen his appeal as a national leader. Chandra Shekhar's time in office, as V.P. Singh's, is really an interregnum during which he hopes to maximise the advantages of his incumbency.

His remarkable survival at the top as a national politician has not been the result of any mass-based following but of his unparalleled abilities to manipulate and exploit the weaknesses of his adversaries to score tactical victories. Having successfully split his own party, his next attempt will be to try and break the Congress(I) vertically by attracting to his camp anti-Rajiv Congressmen who are so far silent because of the lack of any alternative. This development could forestall a mid-term poll.

He will work on Gujarat Chief Minister Patel and Maharashtra supremo Sharad Pawar to achieve this end. Already, within the Congress(I), several senior partymen are in favour of forming a government. And Chandra Shekhar, who has already started lobbying with Congress(I) MPs, could well give a call to all former Congressmen to unite under one banner. Even though Chandra Shekhar's party strength still stands at 63 MPs, hectic efforts are underway, with a little help from the prodigious financial resources of friendly industrialists, to expand that flock. Chandra Shekhar will use every device of realpolitik that he has mastered in order to consolidate his political position. He will do so unabashedly and without any moral posturing. After all, in the world of politics there is no shame.

TROUBLE SPOTS

Intractable Legacy

Prime Minister Chandra Shekhar has inherited a difficult legacy and in his tenuous position has few options in dealing with the situtaiton in the three problem states.

KASHMIR Uncertain Winter

THE Kashmir Valley is getting into its annual act of winter hibernation. For Governor Girish Saxena and the security forces battling the secessionists, the snowy interlude to the search-find-and-fight operation is only an uneasy respite, which could be used to rethink options and strategies.

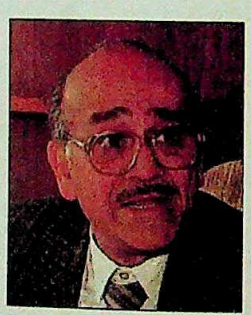
The situation in the Valley at the moment is delicately poised. Says Saxena: "The winter months could prove to be the deciding factor. If we are able to use the advantages in an optimum manner, we can make a lot more headway in overcoming militancy."

But this is easier said than done. Especially since the installation of the Congress(I)-backed Janata Dal(S) Government at the Centre has seen the re-emergence of former chief minister Farooq Abdullah.

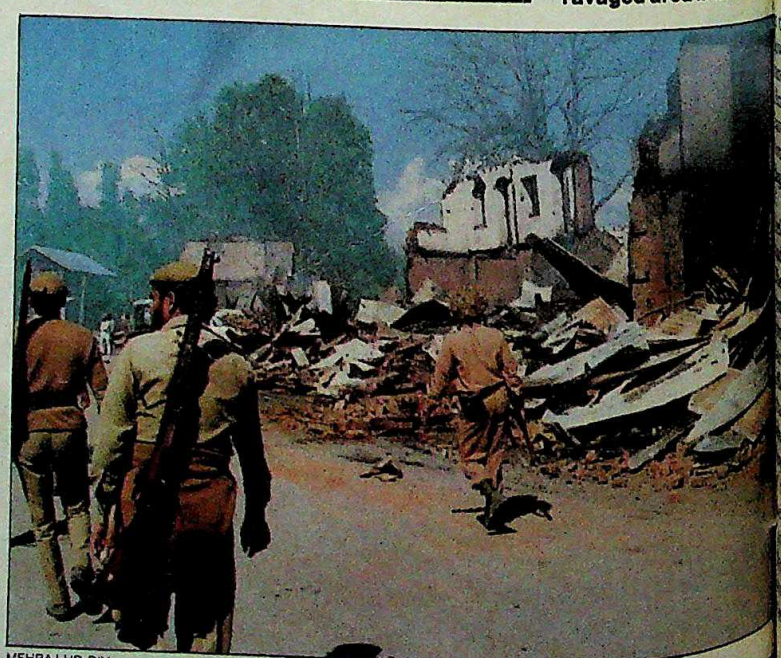
The Saxena administration has opened a channel with top militants like JKLF chief Yasin Malik and second-in-command Hamid Sheikh. And secret talks are already on with Syed Ali Shah Geelani (Muslim United Front) and Abdul Ghani Lone (People's League).

The militants still maintain that the agenda for talks is nothing short of secession from India. JKLF leader Salim Kashmiri told INDIA TODAY from his Srinagar hideout: "If the Government wants to talk over the terms of independence we are willing to sit down. But the prime minister has already said no to that."

The Centre, it appears, wants Farooq Abdullah



Governor Saxena; and ravaged area in Srinagar



MEHRAJ-UD-DIN

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PUNJAB Bloody Escalation

AFTER the extension of President's Rule in September, Punjab seemed to have been relegated to the background of the national political scene. But now the killing fields of Punjab are back on the front page—with a vengeance.

The turmoil-ridden state greeted the new government at Delhi with a volley of rapid-fire massacres at Killianwali, Parol and Jalandhar notching up the highest ever rate of killings in the last decade. In October itself 306 civilians were killed—the highest ever in 10 years. And this month's figure may be even higher. The Centre responded by promising more troops, arresting top Akali leaders, including Akali Dal (Mann) President Simranjit Singh Mann, Prakash Singh Badal, Tota Singh and G.S. Tohra. Moreover, it banned the all-Akali meet at Anandpur Sahib which was to have been held on November 25. With this the stage seems to have been set for a bitter confrontation.

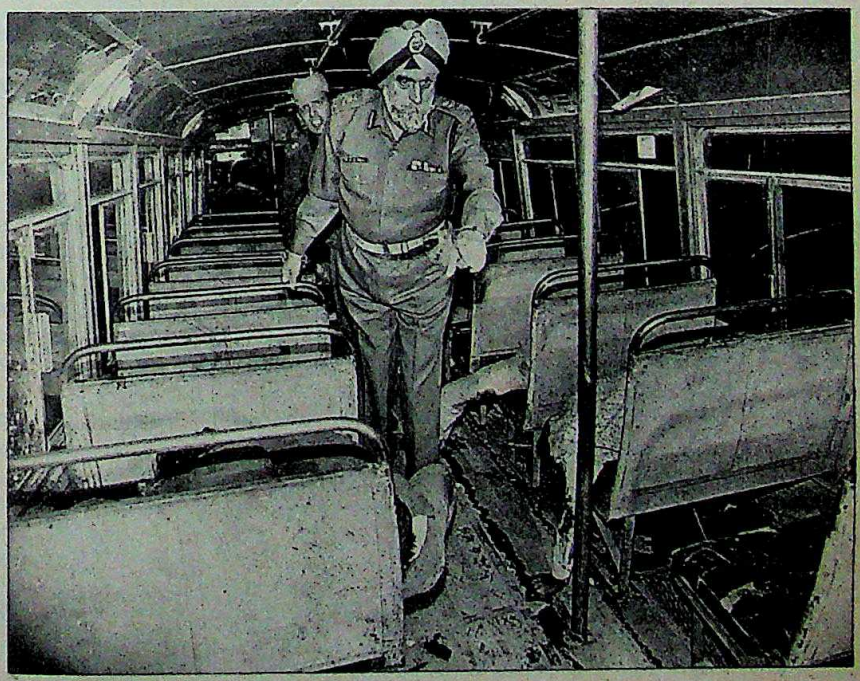
What is alarming is the spurt in the deliberate killing of Hindus. In October, 65 Hindus were killed, accounting for around 27 per cent of the total civilian deaths. Last month nearly 85 per cent of all civilians killed were Hindus. The revival of attacks on Hindus marks a major departure from the militants' earlier stand of not singling out Hindus.

Even the pro-militant Mann appears to have taken by surprise by this recent trend. Mann—who formed the Punjab Sangharsh Morcha, with Hindu leaders, to fight for the rights of all Punjabis—had initially condemned the killing of Hindus. But now, rather characteristically he has changed his stance. Rather than condemn the violence, he tries to explain these killings, saying: "The Hindus have aligned themselves to deny us legal rights."

Viewing the situation as a pure law and order problem, the administration asked for an additional 50 companies of paramilitary forces and sophisticated arms in their first meeting with Prime Minister Chandra Shekhar. Significantly, this time around even Chandra Shekhar—who has always taken a soft line on Punjab condemning Operation Bluestar and even participating in kar sewa—chose to harden his stand. Reveals Punjab's Chief Secretary S.L. Kapur: "The prime minister has indicated the adoption of a tough line."

The Government's ban on the all-Akali meet on the ground that it is an anti-national gathering also appears to be erroneous. In fact, according to all indications, it was to have been the harbinger of Akali unity under one programme. These arrests are bound to alienate even the moderates from the Centre. By this action, the administration has virtually ruled out the possibility

Gill at the scene of a massacre



KARAM SINGH/The Tribune

the National Conference (NC) to don mediator's mantle. Farooq himself is ther keen to play the honest broker ause it offers an opportunity for litical rehabilitation. But says Salim hmiri: "Farooq is a fool. We don't ognise him and are not willing to en to him."

The NC had been the first casualty the militants' operations. Mohammed suf, Srinagar's NC president, was the first political leader to be killed the militants. The JKLF had even rned that Farooq would meet Yusuf's if he tried to re-enter the Valley. party stands discredited and shat- with four of its members in dissolved Assembly killed by the itants, and the rest having quietly hdrawn from the political arena. The headquarters, Mujahid Manzil, in nagar, is closed.

Meanwhile, the confrontation with militants has simmered down even the temperature falls. The 135 CRPF 435 BSF companies have held out in last 11 months with a loss of 150-odd . It even appears that they have ined an upper hand over the mili- s. According to police officials about militants are rounded up every day. mosques no longer blare out seces- st slogans from loudspeakers as y used to. In the last two months e has not been any anti-India pro- sion in Srinagar. The curfew is now fined to the night time. It is, how- r, realised that the apparent lull is eptive, and the advantage the secu- forces enjoy is at best temporary.

There is however a glimmer of hope the response of Nalamar residents of wntown Srinagar who stoned mili- ns in protest against the killing of two dists in their neighbourhood. They even hoisted white flags atop their ses, where six months ago the JKLF gs were fluttering.

The hawks in the Government thus the militants are now on the run, the pressure should be maintained. y consider as premature moves to rt the political process, and view in rmation the involvement of oq Abdullah. Says an irate security cial: "The last thing we need, and too at this stage, is Farooq Abdul- . Our troops would not have been in but for him. He is the root cause the problem." Under pressure from Congress (I), the Chandra Shekhar rnment is clearly determined to the Farooq card, a move that could e even more disastrous the second around.

—HARINDER BAWEJA in Srinagar

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of negotiating with the Akalis.

One reason for this no-compromise stand may be the new political alignment in Delhi and the reluctance of the Akalis to interact with the Congress(I). Not that the Government hasn't been trying to reach out to the Punjab leaders. In fact, Prakash Singh Badal was even offered a ministerial berth in the Cabinet. But he turned it down saying that the Centre should make an effort to solve the Punjab problem. The Government has also been making overtures to Mann, who has not responded for fear of losing the support of the militants. Gurbir Singh of the Punjab Sangharsh Morcha told INDIA TODAY just a day before his arrest: "No mainstream Sikh politician is prepared to join the Union Government for fear of censure in Punjab."

The main problem seems to be that the governor is unable to make even the police accountable to the civil administration. Perhaps most telling is the fact that DGP K.P.S. Gill is often referred to as the governor general of Punjab. Because of his inability to check the police, Governor Virender Verma is seeking the Centre's help to clip the wings of the all-powerful police. Says he: "I want to bring the top heavy administration of the Punjab Police to the notice of the prime minister. We do not need these officers."

That's not all. Verma's other suggestions to the prime minister are equally naive and unrealistic. They include the transfer of Chandigarh and the settlement of territorial and water disputes between Punjab and Haryana. But such issues have nothing to do with solving the main problem.

The least that the Government, which seems to be out of sync with ground realities, can do to contain the situation is to revamp the administration with a more dynamic and responsive leadership. But so far there is no indication of this happening.

—W.P.S. SIDHU in Chandigarh

ASSAM Taking the Plunge

FOR the new government, the crisis in Assam was a classic Catch-22 situation: imposing President's Rule would anger the ruling Asom Gana Parishad (AGP) and lead to the Centre bearing the brunt of the state's problems. The other option—announcing elections—could well trigger off chaos. And there was the fear that elections, due on January 7, could be disrupted by the United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA).

However, the one decisive factor that led to the imposition of President's Rule in the state was the pressure applied by the Congress(I). Says PCC(I) President Hiteshwar Saikia: "We are convinced that elections under the AGP will not be fair."



The AGP, however, is equally forceful in its belief that elections are the only answer. Says Bhrigu Phukan, number two in the Government: "If the Centre could hold elections at the height of the Assam agitation in 1983, why can't they do it now?" Chief Minister Prafulla Kumar Mahanta even warned of a Punjab or Kashmir-like situation if elections were not held on schedule. Underlying that stand is the veiled threat that the AGP and All Assam Students' Union (AASU), may relaunch an agitation on the 'foreigners' issue.

What formed the core of the Centre's dilemma was the belief that the AGP Government was colluding with the terrorists, a fact which had reportedly been pointed out to Mahanta by Chandra Shekhar. Says a leader of the Congress(I) which now has 25 seats to AGP's 64 in the 126-member Assembly: "As it is we are unable to hold meetings. ULFA is gaining strength. If the AGP comes back to power, it will be all over for us."

Mahanta; blast victims in hospital: state of anarchy



SAIBAL DAS

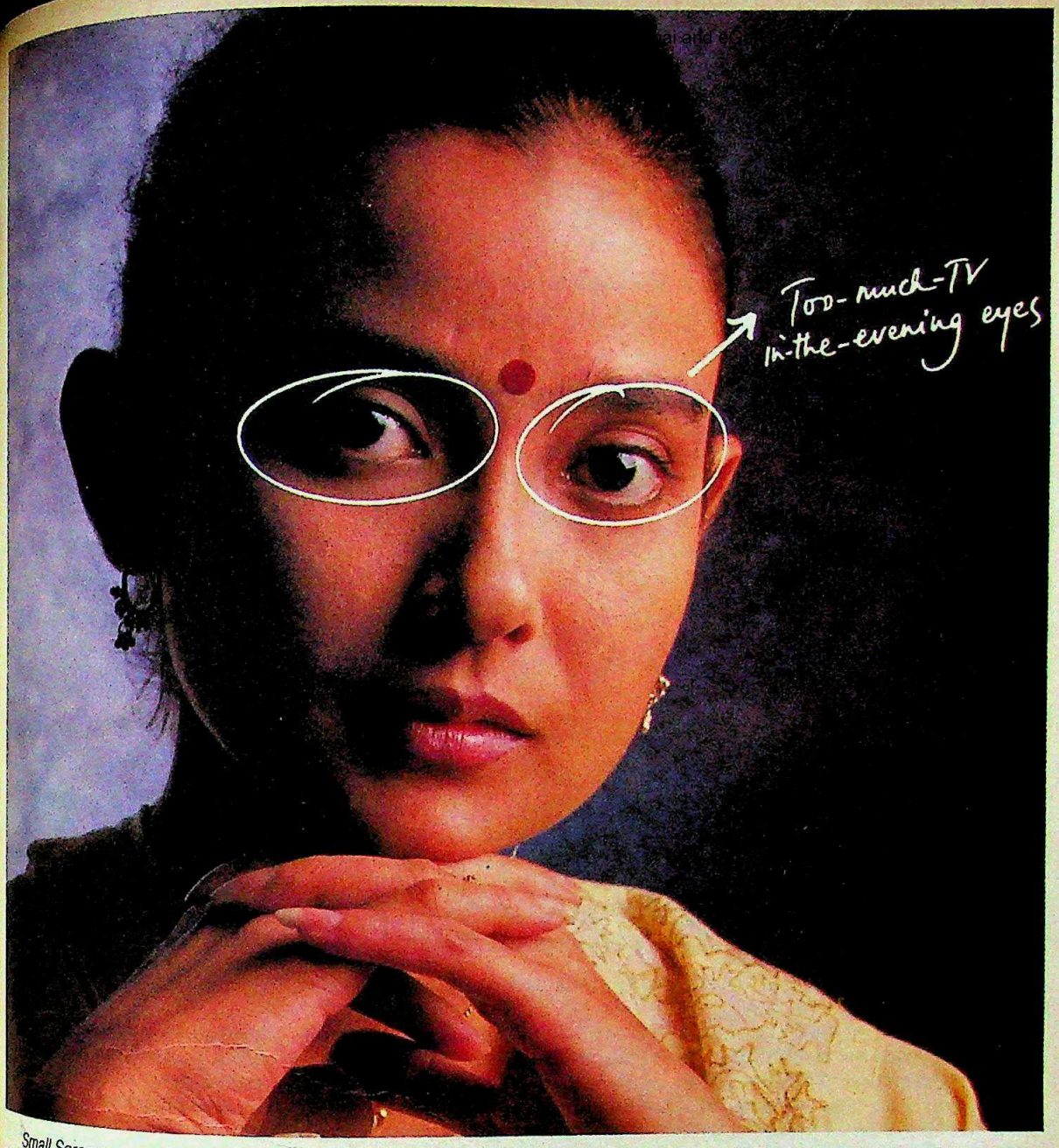
Meanwhile, it was the deteriorating law and order situation that may well have convinced the Centre that President's Rule was the only answer. In recent months, there have been increasing signs to show that it is now ULFA that controls the AGP.

Last month, Doom Dooma Tea Estates, part of the Unilever group, stopped operations in its seven gardens and three factories, and in a secret operation evacuated nine of its senior executives from Assam. This followed ULFA's bid to force a 'levy' of Rs 2.50 on every kilogram of tea marketed by the gardens and slap ransom notes on executives of six tea companies. Doom Dooma's fears were justified as one high-ranking official each of two tea companies were kidnapped and released only after the ransom was paid. Mahanta not only ignored the ransom issue but also threatened to take over Doom Dooma if they failed to resume operations.

With the tea industry, the single largest employer in the state, on the verge of closure, it was an ominous sign. Bomb blasts and communal violence have affected trade in many parts of the state and the confident ULFA is collecting a war fund in preparation for yet another crackdown. Clearly, for the new Government, the decision was a difficult one.

—UTTAM SENGUPTA in Guwahati

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SHARAD PAWAR

Moving Centrestage

With old friend Chandra Shekhar as prime minister and the Congress(I) pulling the strings, the Maharashtra chief minister has become a key actor in national politics.

By M. RAHMAN in Bombay

PRASHANT PANJIAR



■ Pawar with daughter and Chandra Shekhar: exploiting old connections

THE first long journey Chandra Shekhar undertook after taking over as prime minister was to Bombay. One reason was to pay his respects to nonagenarian former prime minister Morarji Desai. The other reason was to express his gratitude to old friend and Maharashtra Chief Minister Sharad Pawar, who had helped arrange Congress(I) support for forming an alternative government. Ambitious and astute, Pawar had at last demonstrated that he too could play a significant role in national politics.

It was a rare occasion at Varsha, the chief minister's official residence on Malabar Hill. After visiting Desai, the Gandhi memorial at Mani Bhavan, his old haunt Ritz Hotel, and his old newspaper baron foe Ramnath Goenka, the prime minister chose to spend the few hours in Bombay not at the Raj Bhavan but at the chief minister's house. With an elated Pawar beside him, Shekhar met with reporters and editors, apart from the chief minister's family, and posed for photographs.

Even as Shekhar was flying back to the capital, Pawar was mixing with guests at a party thrown by Rajya Sabha member Suresh Kalmadi for Rajiv Gandhi aide Satish Sharma and his wife Sterre. The Maratha chieftain appeared at ease in the company of socialites and tycoons, among whom were old friends like Bombay Dyeing's Nusli Wadia and film actor Dilip Kumar. Not even the presence of the two Ambani heirs, Mukesh and Anil, who dropped in because of Sharma, seemed to cramp his style. Pawar's problems with the Reliance family are well-known.

Pawar's critics carp that his ability to relate to people of disparate social and political backgrounds is proof of his unscrupulous opportunism. For his admirers, his skill at making friends and influencing people reflects an increasingly rare quality—a commitment to the politics of consensus. Says an adviser: "Pawar believes in the politics of addition, not subtraction, a doctrine dear to his mentor, the late Y.B. Chavan."

It is a political style the Maratha strongman demonstrates time and again, refusing to abandon it in spite of the suspicions it engenders about his motives within his own party, especially in the inner circle around Rajiv Gandhi. Deep-rooted is the perception that he is willing to do anything to fulfil his politi-

INTERVIEW

"I follow Rajiv's instructions"

SHARAD Pawar spoke about recent political developments to Bombay Bureau Chief M. RAHMAN. *Excerpts:*

Q. You are now very active at the national level. Do you see your role changing within the Congress(I)?

A. I still want to concentrate on my own state, rebuild the party here and provide a better administration. I take up a responsibility at the national level only when Rajiv Gandhi asks me to.

Q. Since you were one of the architects of the new regime, people expect you to continue to assist Shekhar.

A. I don't agree that I was one of the architects of the new Government. Beyond following my party chief's instructions, I played no special role.

Q. Do you feel Chandra Shekhar will be better than V.P. Singh?

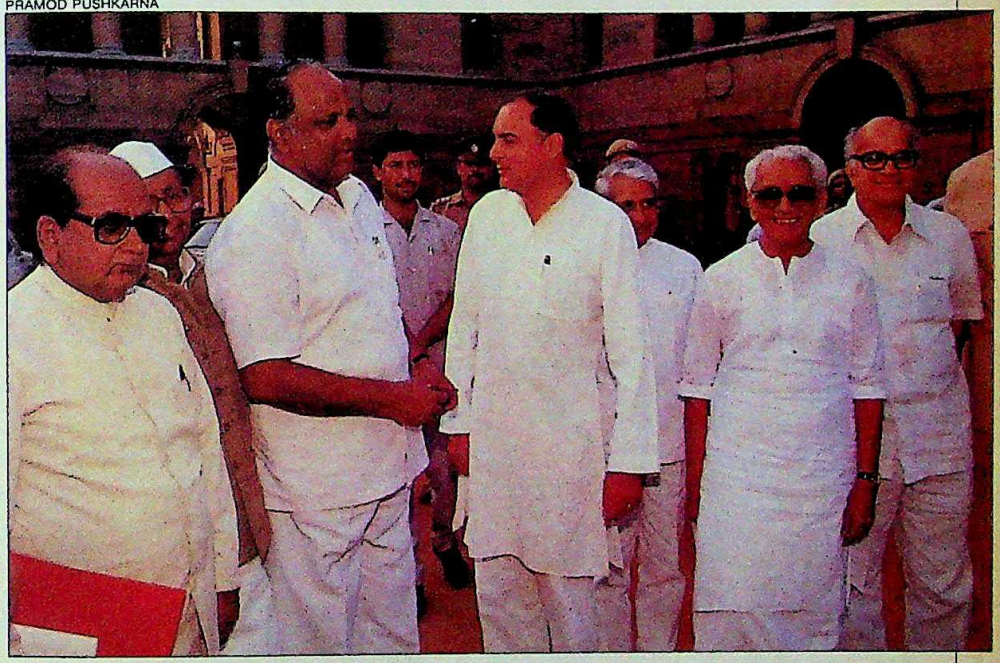
A. Definitely.

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ambitions. The stigma dates back to
when, with the help of friends like
ndra Shekhar, then Janata Party
ef, Pawar brought down the Con-
ress(U)-Congress(I) government of
antidada Patil and installed himself
chief minister. Less than two years
ter, Mrs Gandhi returned to power,
d sacked Pawar's government. After
g years in opposition, Pawar was
ally allowed to rejoin the Congress(I)
y Rajiv in December 1986, and was

PRAMOD PUSHKARNA



■ Pawar with Rajiv and other Congress(I) leaders: emerging importance

Pawar's ability to relate to people of disparate social and political backgrounds engenders a suspicion about his motives within his own party.

rewarded with the chief ministership two years later.

Paradoxically, the Congress(I)'s narrow victory in the February assembly elections against a combined BJP-Shiv Sena onslaught made Pawar's position more secure within his own party. In the 289-member Assembly, the Congress(I) has only 142 seats, against the Sena's 52, the BJP's 42, and the united Janata Dal's 24. It is the support of 10 rebel Congressmen which gives the Congress(I) its narrow majority, a position which is now bound to improve thanks to the backing of breakaway Janata Dal(S) legislators.

AFTER the last assembly poll, Pawar became part of the troika of powerful Congress(I) chief ministers—Veerendra Patil of Karnataka and Chenna Reddy of Andhra Pradesh being the other two—which could resist bullying by the high command. Though Patil was replaced by Bangarappa and the ageing Reddy's reign is in disrepute, Pawar has established a finely calibrated relationship with Rajiv which allows him a measure of independence without alienating his party boss.

Meanwhile, a sensational public rapprochement was reached recently between the chief minister and two of his most vitriolic opponents, former Congress(I) chief minister A.R. Antulay and the Shiv Sena's Bal Thackeray. "In politics, you have to be able to get along even with people you disagree with," explains Pawar. It not only ended the hostility between the leaders, but also brought Pawar much-needed political peace in the state. The Pawar-Thackeray rapprochement kept Sena stormtroopers in check even as riots erupted elsewhere following the crackdown in Ayodhya.

It is Pawar's extraordinary ability to nurture friendships across party lines

Q. *There is the feeling that Rajiv will be the loser either way.*

A. We would think along such lines only if we had lost all confidence in ourselves.

Q. *George Fernandes seems to suggest that at one point you were willing to cross over to V.P. Singh's side.*

A. That's all humbug. We never talked about my crossing over. It's true that when there were riots all over the country, we talked about whether the Congress(I) could play a positive role to help save the nation. And my discussions with Fernandes were with the full understanding that I would report each and every word to the Congress(I) president.

Q. *There is also the charge that you helped bring down the V.P. Singh government just when it was about to appoint a commission to inquire into the extent of your involvement in land transactions.*

A. The demand for a commission of inquiry is 10 months old. Why didn't they appoint one then, when they were not faced with any crisis?

Q. *You've recently managed to get opponents like A.R. Antulay and Bal Thackeray on your side.*

A. We can't continue with the infighting if we are going to work together in the Congress(I). There was initially some misunderstanding with Antulay, but we sat across the table and resolved it. I definitely don't subscribe to Thackeray's ideas about a Hindu *rashtra*, but I am not going to oppose him in matters which are useful for the state just because he belongs to another party.

Q. *Is it true that you let Thackeray win the Bombay municipal elections and he lets you maintain law and order?*

A. Isn't maintaining law and order important? If there had been trouble I would've been attacked, and since there wasn't any trouble, something deeper is being hinted at.

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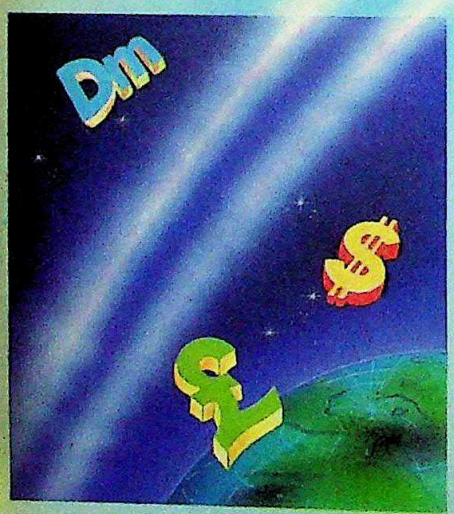
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National perspective – Global vision.

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which made him useful to Rajiv Gandhi when the time came to bring down V.P. Singh's government and back Chandra Shekhar. In the past, the same quality had left Pawar open to allegations by other Congress(I) leaders that he was "cavorting and conspiring" with the Opposition against his own party leader.

A worrying factor to his supporters is the image of Pawar created by the media of a man aspiring ultimately for the highest political office in the land. Pawar may be a sophisticated version of the late Tamil Nadu Congress(I) leader Kamaraj, but neither his Hindi nor his English is good enough to allow him to acquire a mass following at the national level. He is realistic enough to know he cannot be prime minister, insists an adviser, since only a politician from the Hindi belt can harbour such ambitions. Even opposition leaders agree that Pawar's political strategy increasingly reflects a desire to remain in Maharashtra.

Moreover, he is yet to gain unquestioned sway over his party in his home state. Even his rehabilitation vis-a-vis the party high command is still incomplete—after more than two years as chief minister, he is still awaiting permission to expand his ministry.

IF Pawar's maiden stint as chief minister in the late '70s was marked by energy and dynamism, his current term has been notable for raging controversies and court petitions relating to the Government's urban land policy. Pawar denies charges of financial skullduggery, but his critics charge that his political warchest has been built up mainly through contributions from unscrupulous builders. Charges Chandrashekhar Prabhu, former Congress(I) MLA and an architect and urban rights campaigner, that despite a high court order, construction on 285 plots in the city which have been dereserved is still going on.

Clearly, Pawar's talent for maintaining his network of contacts within the Opposition even after coming to power has paid off, because so far the outcry against the land deals is restricted mainly to the media and environmental groups. No opposition party has launched a campaign to embarrass Pawar.

There is considerable speculation even in the state capital that Pawar will break the accord between the BJP and the Shiv Sena—which for the moment is the main challenge to the ruling party. Significantly, the two parties already seem divided on Chandra Shekhar, what with Sena MPs abstaining from voting against the new prime minister in the Lok Sabha. "My party remained neutral because we would like to watch how Chandra Shekhar performs," explains Sena leader Manohar Joshi.

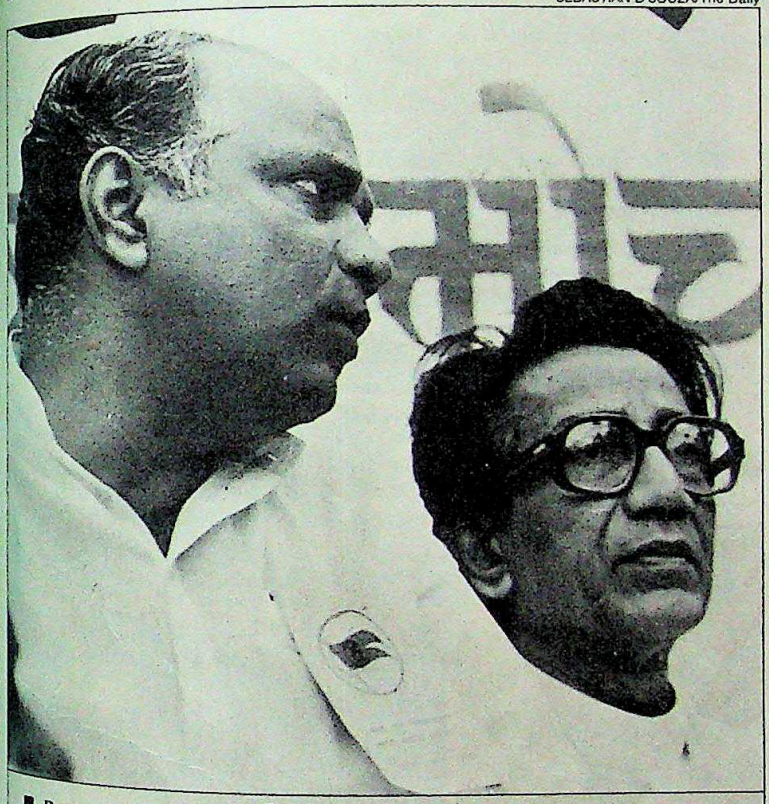
However, BJP and Sena leaders ridicule reports that Pawar will break the accord. Adds BJP leader Pramod Mahajan: "Pawar tried to put a lot of opposition people in his pocket, but neither are his pockets so large nor are we so small that he will succeed."

Pawar has also emerged as the undisputed Congress(I) leader in the state. His knowledge of state politics right down to the village level is unmatched by that of any other politician, and is comparable only to late Y.B. Chavan. Even as chief minister, Pawar keeps in close touch with political workers from the districts. After the death of Vasantdada Patil, he is now the unquestioned spokesman of the powerful Maratha sugar lobby, but he has assiduously nurtured his image as a leader acceptable to all sections of society. "Pawar has brought an element of stability to Maharashtra politics," notes BPCC(I) President Murali Deora.

His personality, nevertheless, still remains an enigma, and there is no satisfactory answer yet to the big question: will he make a bid for national leadership like Y.B. Chavan or will he ultimately remain content as a powerful regional leader like Vasantdada Patil? His supporters acknowledge that after Chavan, Pawar is the first Maharashtra leader with the potential to develop an "all-India stature".

Pawar himself has been insisting that he will not look beyond his state for political glory. However, that may be only so much strategy. What he has clearly done at the moment is to demonstrate his ability to play a crucial political role in New Delhi, and the events of the past few weeks may yet signal an important turning point in his career.

SEBASTIAN D'SOUZA/The Daily



■ Pawar with Thackeray (right): a political deal?

The Pawar-Thackeray rapprochement kept the Shiv Sena in check during the Ayodhya crisis.

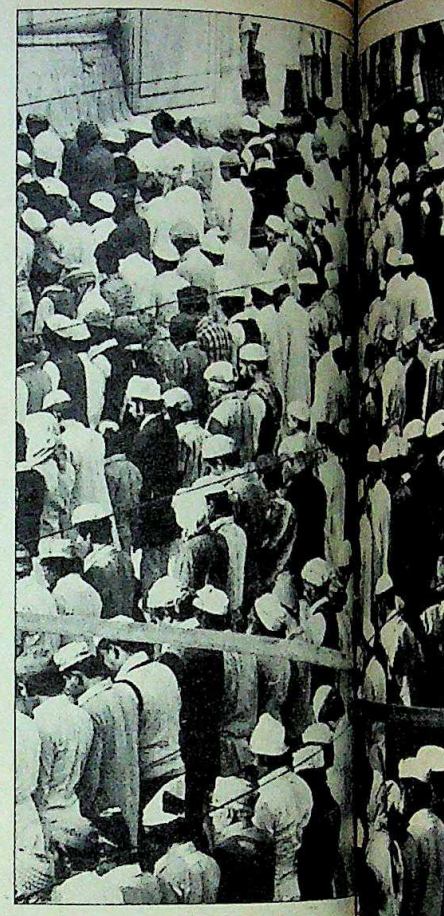
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MUSLIMS

A Mood of Moderation

The restraint shown by the community during the Ayodhya conflict suggests a shift from hawkish postures.



By BHASKAR ROY and FARZAND AHMED

THE communal flare-ups that erupted in the wake of the Rath Yatra conjured up for many Muslims the trauma of Partition. But for the country's largest minority the tumultuous events caused by the VHP-BJP Hindu call to liberate Ayodhya have brought them face to face with a new reality—that they can no longer live in isolation and fight their battles by themselves.

Aware of the shifting attitude of a majority of the Muslims, the leadership too is softening its rhetoric. The shrill fundamentalist cries have given way to a sense of moderation. Says Tariq Anwar, former Congress(I) MP and president, All India Quami Tanzeem: "Muslims have started feeling that they are part of the national mainstream and they cannot solve their problems in isolation. And for this particular reason the so-called leaders could not exploit their religious sentiments."

Many of the hawkish self-proclaimed leaders of the community, it seems, are no longer playing on religious sentiments. For instance, as tension prevailed following the attempted demolition of the Babri mosque, Abdullah Bukhari, Shahi Imam of Delhi's Jama Masjid, urged the Muslims, "to protect their Hindu brothers in areas where they are in minority". Last fortnight he condemned provocative slogans by some "hot-headed" Muslims which sparked off riots in Delhi's walled city and apologised on their behalf.

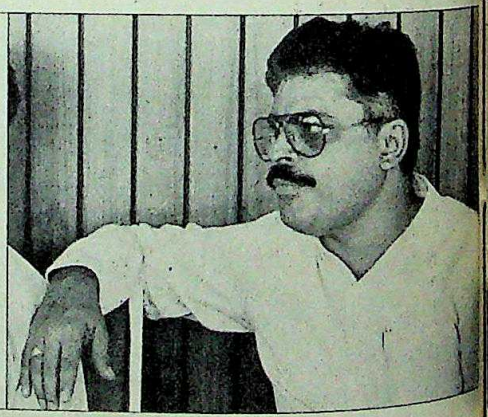
In fact throughout the tense months, Muslims displayed remarkable restraint despite continuous provocation. Commented *Quami Morcha* of Varanasi: "The silence and patience of the Indian Muslims during the recent incidents in Ayodhya is exemplary."

Such restraint was best in evidence when riots broke out in early November in the eastern parts of Patna for the first time ever. Muslims themselves handed over to the police a Muslim youth who was creating trouble while another young Muslim was caught, his head shorn and paraded.

According to Professor Sohail Ahmad, former general secretary of the Muslim Majlis-e-Mashwarat, Bihar, a new combination of *zalim* (exploiters) and *mazloom* (exploited) is coming into being. The same people who used to attack Muslims have become their protectors. He was referring to the non-participation of certain Hindu castes, especially the Yadavs, in the recent riots in Patna. This secret understanding came about as the Muslims took a neutral stance during the agitation against the Mandal Commission report and the Yadavs decided to pay back the decent turn. Such shifts in communal equations at the grassroots level have given many Muslims a belief that ultimately what is of utmost importance is mutual understanding.

Surely the community leadership has come a long way since Syed Shahabuddin gave the controversial call to Muslims to boycott the Republic Day functions on the Babri Masjid issue in 1987. There is a realisation that militant elements in the majority community can be best fought with the cooperation of the saner sections of society. Says Javed Habib, a prominent member of the Babri Masjid Action Committee (BMAC): "India has survived as a secular nation mainly because its overwhelming majority of its population is Hindu." It is not surprising then that Muslim politics is now being dominated by the moderates who have effectively sidelined the hawks. At times during the recent crisis, it seemed that

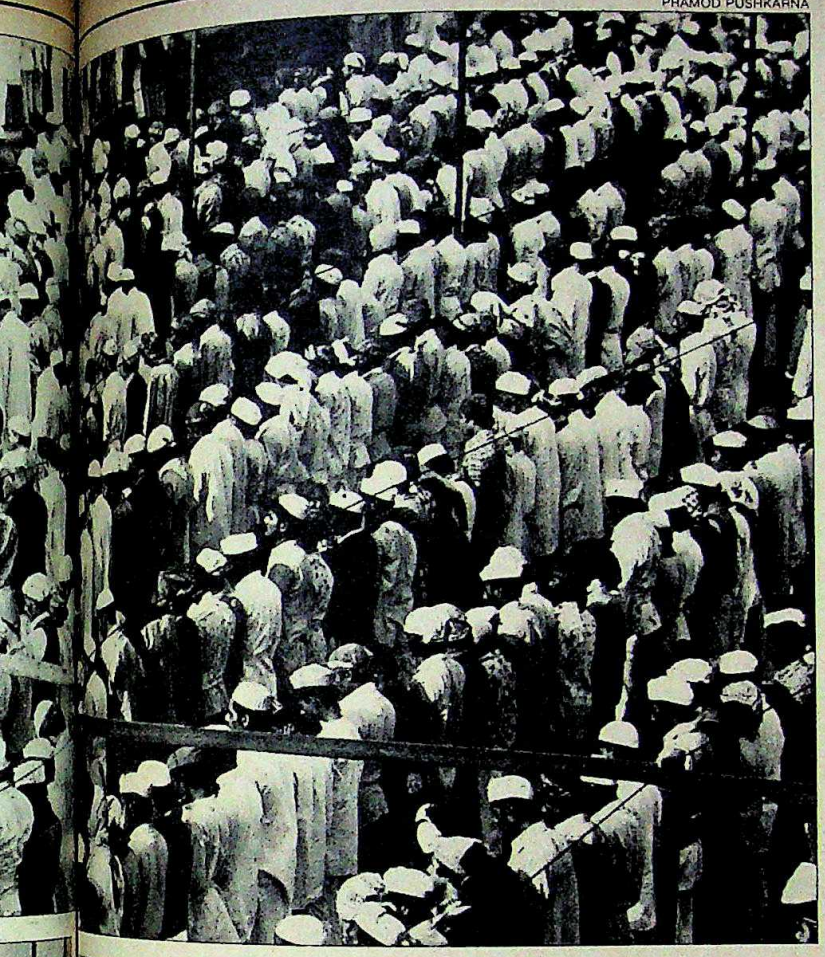
> "Muslims have started feeling that they cannot solve their problems in isolation."
>
> TARIQ ANWAR
> *Former Congress(I) MP*



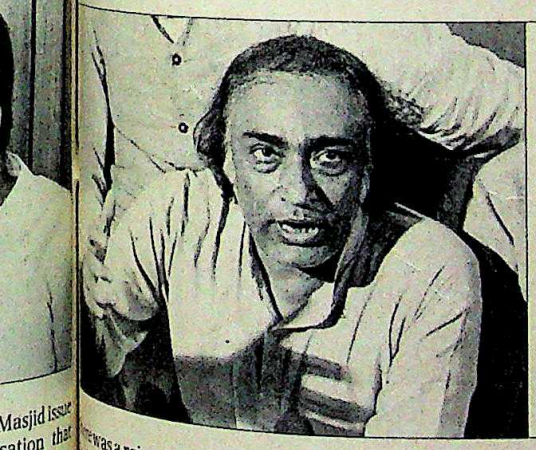
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PRAMOD PUSHKARNA



Muslims offering namaz at Jama Masjid: time for introspection



> "India has survived as a secular nation because the majority is Hindu."
>
> JAVED HABIB
> *Member, Babri Masjid Action Committee*

...was a rejection of the "provocative ...ership", as Ahmad terms it.
...but this change in approach has not ...en as sudden as it seems. In fact, ...ng the last couple of years the BMAC ...dership has silently carried out a ...paign among the Hindu intelligen- ...to win their sympathy. This, the ...ers claim, has yielded results. Says ...: "Our experience is whenever we ...gone to the Hindus with a reason- ...ase they have agreed; whenever ...are been provocative the result has ...disastrous." There is even a sur- ...ngly humble proposal from some Muslim intellectuals to refer the shrine dispute to the four shankaracharyas and accept whatever their verdict is.

AND there is a shrewd change of tack too with the Muslim leaders who want to portray Hindu militancy as anti-constitutional and non-secular and thus label it as something which goes against the basic concepts of the state. Says Syed Shahabuddin: "Since the challenge of Hindu militancy is not only to the minorities but to the state itself, it must be taken up by all secular forces. No minority can afford to have a direct confrontation with majority fundamentalism."

The BMAC—at present the most representative of Muslim groups even though it is split and Syed Shahabuddin leads a tear-away group—is in fact exploring different avenues for settling issues concerning the community and is looking for ways to be part of mainstream politics. Initially, many Muslims saw in the emergence of V.P. Singh, particularly after the Congress(I)'s dithering on the Shilanyas issue in November 1989, a man with a difference—a party leader who would refrain from dabbling in the traditional communal vote bank politics. Says Yaseen Akhtar Misbahi, vice-president, All India Muslim Law Conference: "Successive Congress prime ministers had only exploited the Muslims without ensuring benefits of development for them. Singh sincerely tried to make the Muslims partners in power." Singh is now trying his political best to continue to extract more mileage from this sentiment by stressing that he sacrificed his office for their community.

In the coming power struggle, Singh counts on the Muslim support (Muslims form about 12 per cent of the population) as his biggest advantage. According to the Muslim leaders there are 100-odd parliamentary constituencies where the Muslims are over 20 per cent of the electorate. In another 100 they are 10 to 20 per cent and thus could be a major advantage. But ironically if the communal stand-off ends, the concept of vote banks also could turn topsy-turvy and shatter the calculation of major political parties, which would perhaps take the sting out of the Hindutva backlash.

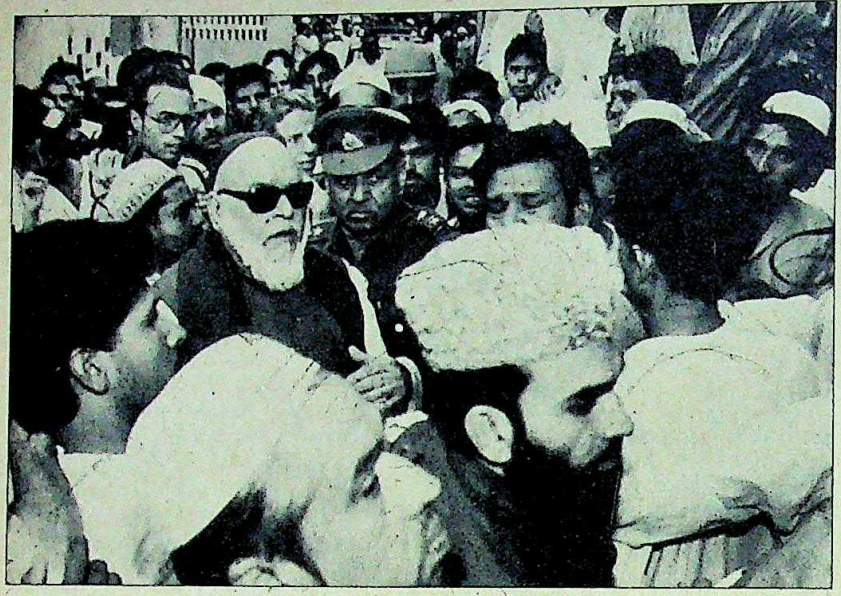
But for the present, political alignment with Singh alone does not provide the panacea for all the problems facing the community now. In fact, more than a sense of insecurity, it is the looming prospect of loss of identity that perturbs the Muslims most. With the proliferation of militant Hindu organisations like the Shiv Sena, VHP and Bajrang Dal a feeling of alienation—that four decades after Independence their integration into the Indian society is at best cosmetic—has crept into their psyche.

There is even a move for dialogue with the BJP-VHP leadership. Gone are the days of the provocative call for the

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SHARAD SAXENA



Imam Bukhari: softening his strident stand

> "No minority can afford a direct confrontation with majority fundamentalism."
>
> SYED SHAHABUDDIN
> *Chairman, Babri Masjid Action Committee*



Ayodhya march to liberate the mosque. Says Misbahi: "The Ayodhya march decision was hasty and ill-conceived." The leadership knows that by hardening its position it cannot win the sympathy of the liberals in other communities. The Imam himself has suggested dialogue between the leaders of both religions as the only way out of the intractable Babri tangle.

Naqui Husein Jafri who teaches English literature at Delhi's Jamia Millia University, traces the genesis of the current religious revival to the mass conversion of Harijans to Islam at Meenakshipuram in south Tamil Nadu in 1981. "That evoked very sharp reactions," he says. He, however, holds that the current environment of communal hatred is alien to the Indian social ethos as accommodation and tolerance have been the practice and the "genius of this land".

Whatever the origins of the communal divide, what is significant is that there is now a widening wedge between the Muslim leaders and the masses. Many resent the ivory tower attitude of the leaders. For instance, it is pointed out that Maulana Quasmi, secretary of the All India Majlis-e-Mashwarat, did not visit Bhagalpur, the scene of communal riots last year but organised the Harmain-Sharifain conference for the protection of Mecca and Saudi Arabia from Iraqi invasion.

THE leadership question apart, the new generation of Muslims is busy trying to keep pace with the upwardly mobile society instead of getting stuck in the quagmire of communal issues. Says young Urdu writer and journalist Rizwan Ahmad: "Muslims are now more concerned about bread than any emotional issue." Many among them have also come to believe that the Babri Masjid issue is only a political ruse to unite the Hindus and it will be best if they do not get involved in the Hindu game. And there is a growing feeling that just as Muslims are turning away from their hawkish leaders the Hindus too will apply the same logic to L.K. Advani. "Undoubtedly the Hinduism of Mahatma Gandhi will outlive that of Ashok Singhal," says Jafri.

This indeed is the predominant feeling among Muslims now. The turnaround in their attitude is reflected even in the Jammaat-e-Islami. The hardline organisation which once had the aim of establishing *hukumat-e-Illahi* has now launched Shanti Manchs and the *Nafrat Mitao-Insaniat Bachao* movement for communal harmony.

The Babri movement, some Muslim intellectuals believe, may in fact have a positive fallout—by serving as the catalyst for reform within the community. The current crisis has made the community look inwards. But on issues like the personal law the community's view is clear. "For the Muslims the Shariat is final. We cannot question it," says Misbahi.

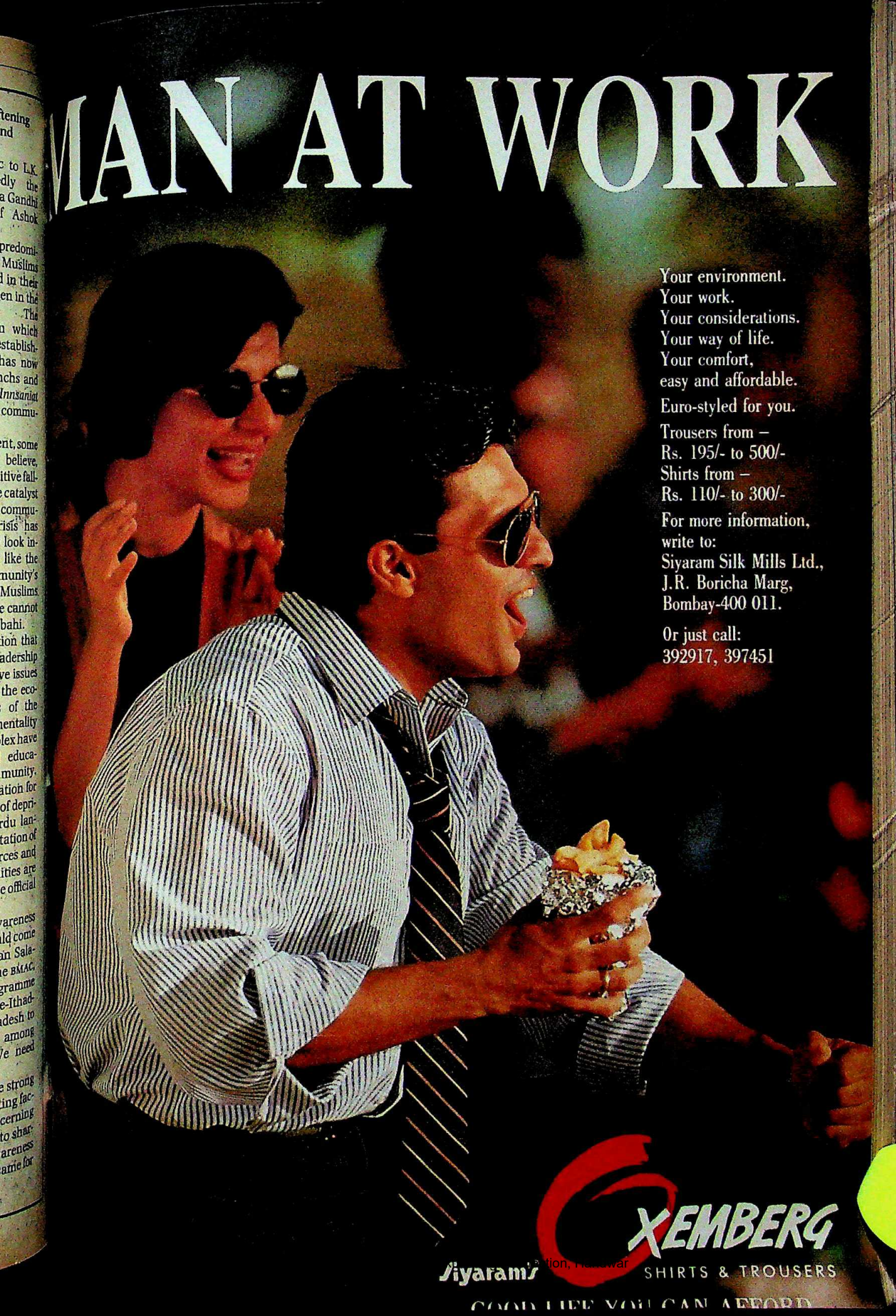
There is a realisation that the earlier Muslim leadership harped only on emotive issues without highlighting the economic backwardness of the community. A siege mentality and the minority complex have impeded the economic and educational development of the community. Perhaps there is some justification for the Muslims' ingrained sense of deprivation. The neglect of the Urdu language, the negligible representation of Muslims in the state police forces and the lack of business opportunities are cited as the manifestation of the official indifference to their welfare.

There is however a new awareness that initiative for reforms should come from within the society. Sultan Salahuddin Owaisi, president of the MMAC, mentions the ambitious programme launched by his party, Majlis-e-Ithad-Ul-Muslimeen, in Andhra Pradesh to encourage higher education among the Muslims. Says Jafri: "We need reforms in education."

It is reassuring that despite strong leadership rivalry and debilitating factionalism the major issues concerning the community are coming into sharper focus. With this new awareness things will perhaps not be the same for the Indian Muslim.

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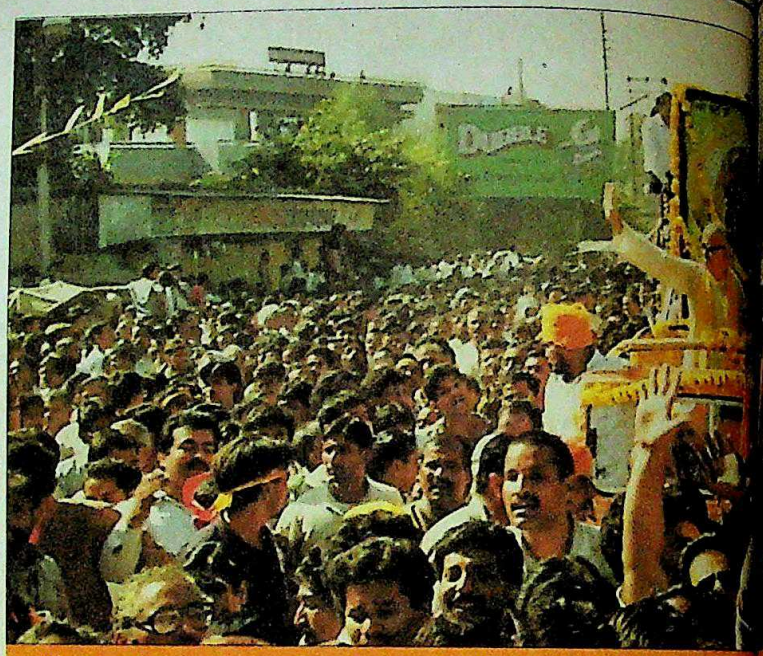
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AYODHYA

The Siege Ahead

The city is centrestage as December 6 approaches, and kar sewaks arrive.

BY DILIP AWASTHI in Ayodhya



The tumultuous response Advani received indicated clearly that the religious

THERE is one telling incident which shows how Faizabad has changed from being a vaguely Left-oriented, peaceful town not particularly bothered about its proximity to Ayodhya, into a rage of saffron, breathing defiance at Chief Minister Mulayam Singh Yadav and his security forces. L.K. Advani's renewed Rath Yatra on November 19 covered the 7 km between Faizabad and Ayodhya in four crawling hours, having to wedge its way through a turbulent sea of humanity.

The preparations for the renewed thrust towards the disputed site, due on December 6, by kar sewaks, were in evidence. Unlike the last time, people had geared up their kitchens to feed the kar sewaks who are expected to descend on Ayodhya from surrounding villages and townships well on time.

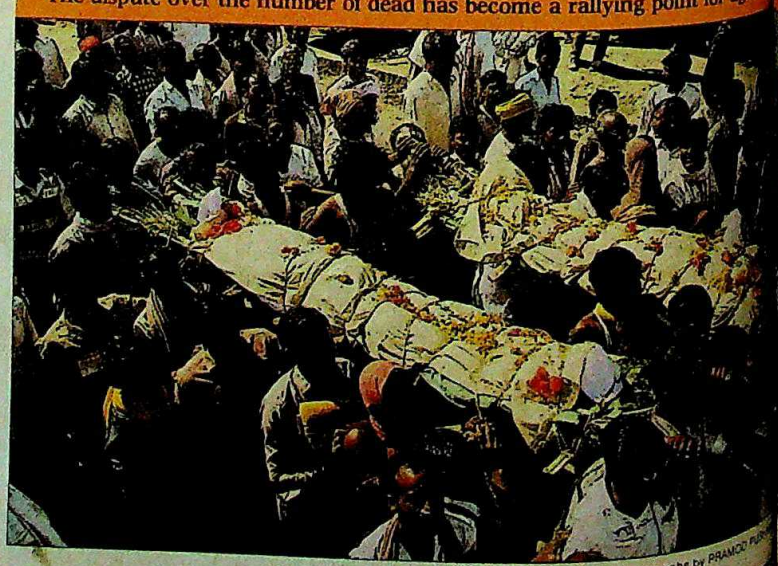
Imperishables were being carefully hoarded because the 2,000-odd shops in Ayodhya were in full preparation to down shutters as soon as the klaxon sounded. Even on the day of Advani's hugely successful visit, local people had organised tea-stalls and distributed *batashas* (sugar dollops) to those who had come to see him. Says Avdesh Singh, 40, a local businessman: "This time, the kar sewaks will not have to starve. In fact, the local people are so involved that they will queue up to feed the kar sewaks."

The violence that the people of Ayodhya witnessed on October 30 and November 2 will remain etched in their memories for years. The see-saw battle of nerves, in which the police initially surrendered before the militant bands of kar sewaks, sounded the reveille. Thousands of fence-sitting residents of the town couldn't digest the slaughter and the brutal crackdown and joined the hordes of Hindu revivalists.

Looking at Faizabad and Ayodhya today, it is clear that the movement is now a militant juggernaut hurtling at an unrelenting pace. Its adherents are in an uncompromising mood and are unlikely to heed any calls for moderation. Indeed, even the moderates, once capable of providing a leadership that could be counted on to negotiate on the issue in a spirit of give and take, seem to have clearly turned into hawks. Mahants, politicians, the VHP all speak in one hardline voice.

The kar sewaks who fell to police bullets on October 30 and November 2 are being commemorated as martyrs there are plans to take urns with their ashes around the country before their immersion in the Ganga in Allahabad on January 14. The spots where they were shot dead have been bestowed the dignity of shrines by the town's residents. And about a dozen shops have cropped up in this area exclusively selling pictures—culled from newspapers and magazines—of the incidents. Local people have also printed pamphlets with

The dispute over the number of dead has become a rallying point for agita

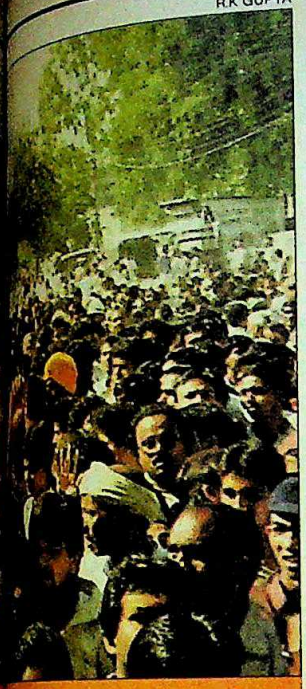


Photographs by PRAMOD PU

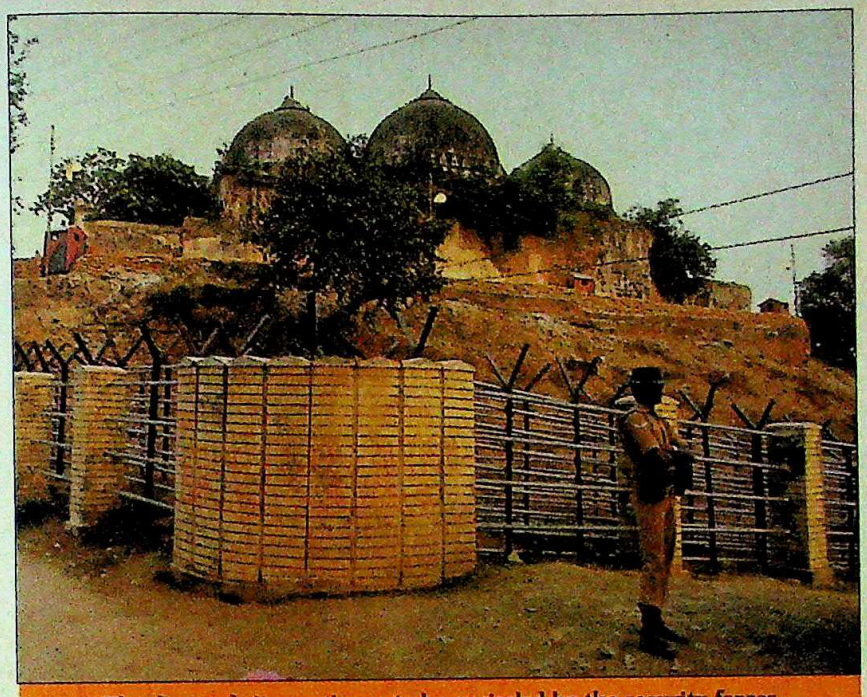
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R.K GUPTA



...ing as December 6 approaches



The disputed site continues to be encircled by the security forces

...eak in one ...ell to police ...November ... as martyrs ...s with their ... before their ... Allahabad ... where they ...estowed the ...town's res... shops have ...lusively sell... newspapers ...dents. Local ...nphlets with ...

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...is of the killings and distribute them ...e thousands who flock to the town ...rch religious gratification and plain ...osity. In the coming days, this curi... ...y is bound to become religious fer... ...e. In the aftermath of the last blitz... ...g, the 7,000-odd temples, both big ...d pathetic lean-tos, are doing brisk ...ness. This, say observers, is only ...ay to get brisker as the December 6 ...-off approaches.

...nevitably then, the town is along... ...e girding itself for another, and possi... ...more rancorous, confrontation with ...e security forces which continue to ...ck key roads and encircle the disputed site. The state Government has received reports that this time round armed volunteers will be escorting the kar sewaks, and that in case the security forces come down too heavily on them, they will react violently.

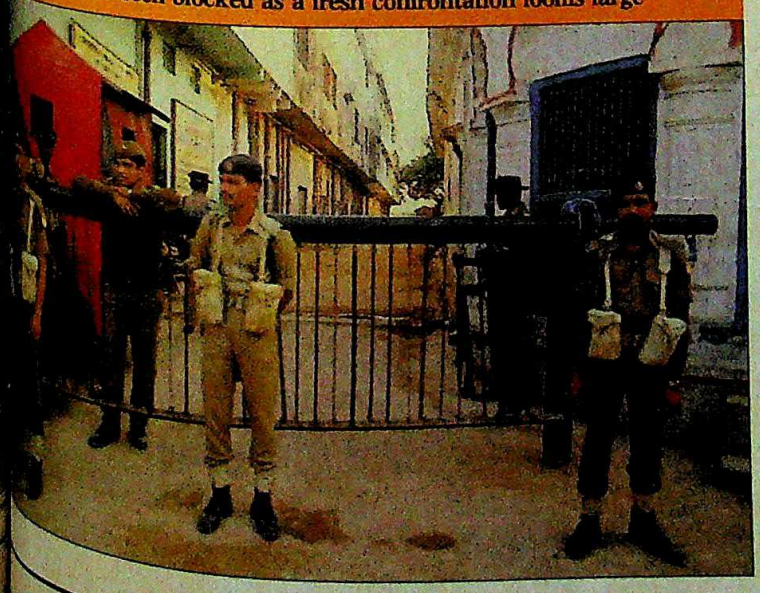
THIS is another facet of the dangerous militancy. Even though VHP General Secretary Ashok Singhal had warned off militants in public meetings, the rank and file of the VHP remains aggressively defiant. Says a Bajrang Dal functionary in Lucknow: "We won't force a confrontation. But we won't go to Ayodhya without being adequately prepared for every eventuality."

This confrontationist attitude has obviously come in the wake of the continuing dispute about the number of deaths in Ayodhya following the police action. The claims vary wildly. While Singhal claims that over 400 kar sewaks are still missing, officials say only 11 people died.

However, there is one non-partisan account by a team of journalists—including representatives of the foreign press—which went around the lanes and bylanes immediately after the firing. The team was able to account for 26 deaths. The journalists spotted five bodies at the Dant Dhawan Kund, three near Khaki Akhara, three near the Hanuman Garhi temple, one at Ram Bagh, two near the Kotwali, five at Mani Ram Chawni, three at Ayodhya hospital and two at the Faizabad district hospital. In addition, one constable of the Central Industrial Security Force died and another protestor died later in hospital. There is still considerable uncertainty about the alleged dredging up of six bodies from the Saryu river.

Meanwhile, Chief Minister Mulayam Singh Yadav is now on a sticky wicket: the support given to him by the Congress(I) was on the condition that he appoint a judicial inquiry into the deaths in Ayodhya. Yadav had no choice but to buckle under and appoint a senior high court serving judge to look into the matter. Officials involved in the Ayodhya fracas see this as a virtual withdrawal of the chief minister's sup-

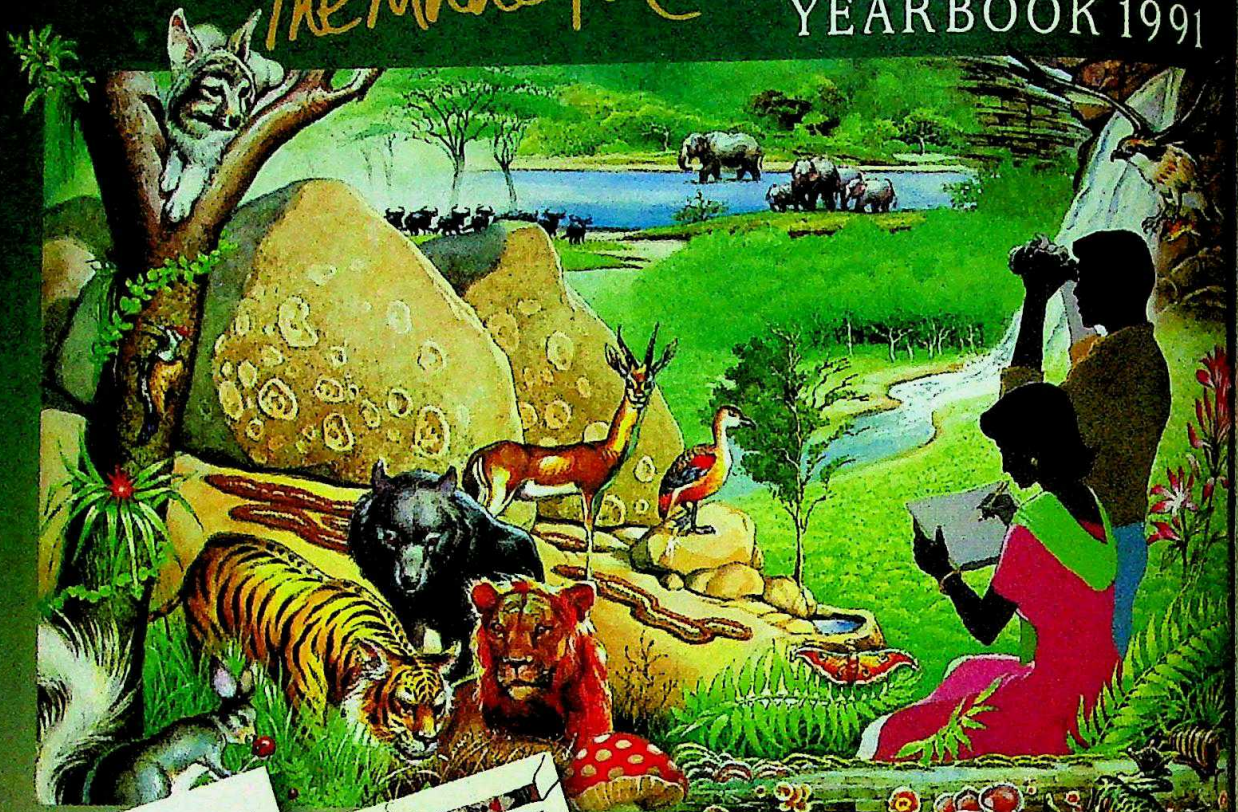
Key roads have been blocked as a fresh confrontation looms large



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Though security remains tight, groups of pilgrims are being let in for *darshan* on a regular basis

port to them and are preparing to defend themselves. Says one of these upset officials: "After all, we had categorical orders from the top to fire. We do have some documentation on this and would, without question, use it in our defence."

A VHP pamphlet referred to as a "hit list" identifies Commissioner Madhukar Gupta, DIG G.L. Sharma, SSP Subhash Joshi, CRPF Commandant Paramjit Singh, Deputy Commandant I.S. Bhullar and two inspectors as "the killers". The pressure on them to wriggle out of a nasty situation when the inquiry gets underway will be tremendous and could spell the beginning of another controversy involving the chief minister.

As it is, the people of Ayodhya, initially unmoved by the torrent let loose by the VHP, would now flay Yadav for, as they see it, disturbing the sanctity of their town and for destroying its fragile economy. During the *parikrama* periods earlier, shopkeepers used to be hard put to cater to about 20 lakh pilgrims a week. Says Ram Sagar, 38, a shopkeeper who sells scarves with "Ram Ram" printed on them: "Last year, I used to sell 150 to 200 scarves per day, besides other articles." He has lost almost everything following the curfew after the firing. All shops in Ayodhya, in fact, remained closed except for a couple near the Mani Ram Chawni which was the headquarters of the kar sewaks.

WHAT has also angered the people is the "high-handedness" of the security forces on November 2. The bruising they got at the police's hands will take time and effort to heal. That day, say residents, the police barged into about 60 temples and over 100 houses in the congested, narrow lanes across Hanuman Garhi. Says Om Sri Bharti, 45, a local teacher: "They broke open the door of my house and about 50 armed CRPF men rushed in they beat me and my husband and slapped my nine-year-old daughter. They even tore up her school books. I don't know why they took out their frustration on us." Says Mahant Ram Charitra Das, president of the Ramjanmabhoomi Sewa Samiti: "I will never forget the humiliation that was meted out to us, to even the priests and sadhus peacefully living in the ashrams here."

In an obvious effort to keep their jurisdictions intact, even the moderate religious heads of Ayodhya, who at one time wanted nothing to wreck the peace in the area, say that they are in no mood to begin a dialogue with the chief minister. "Now we have to avenge the death of each kar sewak," says Mahant Ramchandra Paramhans, president of the Ramjanmabhoomi Nyas. "Blood for blood is what I want." Swami Chinmayananda is even more incendiary. Declares he: "I and the religious figureheads of this country would not like to communicate with even Mulayam Singh Yadav's ghost."

On his part, the Uttar Pradesh chief minister has shown some leniency: he did allow devotees in on November 5; and although the BSF and the CRPF still tightly girdle the entire temple area, groups of pilgrims are being let in for *darshans* on a regular basis. But the hiatus between November 2 and December 6 is unlikely to give him either stability or a breather. In fact things might worsen. For it is certain that the VHP-BJP ranks are coming back, and this time the residents of Ayodhya seem to be actively with them, and against a state government which they feel has played a key role in sundering the peace of their town.

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CART (Stationery)
29 SALONE INTERNAZIONALE DEL'GIOCATTOLO (Toys)

FEBRUARY

MIAS INVERNALE (Sportswear)
MILANOVENDEMODA STUDIO (Ladies Fashion)
MODIT (Italian Fashion)
MACEF PRIMAVERA (Household Articles - Goldsmithery)
B.I.T. (International Tourism)
MIFLOR (Flowers)
SICOF (Cine, Photo, Optical & Audio Visual Products)

MARCH

CONTEMPORARY (Fashion)
TAU EXPO (Environmental Protection)
MODA IN (Textile Accessories)
59 MIPEL (Leather Goods)
27 COMISPEL (Furs)
IPACK-IMA (Packaging)
I.CO. GRAPHICS (Computer Graphics)

APRIL

SALONE DEL MOBILE DI MILANO (Furniture)

MAY

EURONATURA (Health Food)
16 MIAD (Confectionery)
PLAST (Plastics)
MIDO (Optics)
STAR (Furnishing Fabrics)
INTEL (Electrotechnics & Electronics)

JUNE

ESMA (Knitwear)
CHIBIDUE (Costume Jewellery)
SETTIMANA INTERNAZIONALE DI FIERA MILANO

JULY

MIAS ESTIVO (Sportswear)

SEPTEMBER

EIMU (Office Machinery)
MACEF AUTUNNO (Household Articles, Goldsmithery)
MILANOVENDEMODA STUDIO (Ladies Fashion)
SPOSAITALIA (Bridal Wear)
MODIT (Italian Fashion)
MITECH (Hardware Tools, D.I.Y.)
VITRUM (Glass Products)
MICAM - MODACALZATURA (Shoes)

OCTOBER

MODA IN (Textile Accessories)
25 SMAU (Office Machinery)
CONTEMPORARY (Fashion)
19 INTERNATIONAL EXPO DENTAL & 6 EXPOTECNODENTAL (Dentistry)
IBTS (Telecommunications)
60 MIPEL (Leather Goods)
58 MIFED (Cinema Market)
COMMERCIO ATTREZZATURE (Equipment for Trade)
TURISMO ATTREZZATURE (Tourism)
S I C (Coffee)
18 SALONE INTERNAZIONALE DEL GELATO E DELLA PASTICCERIA (Ice Creams & Pastries)
E B E (Beverages)
SIPRAL (Food Products)
EXPO VIP (Restaurants)

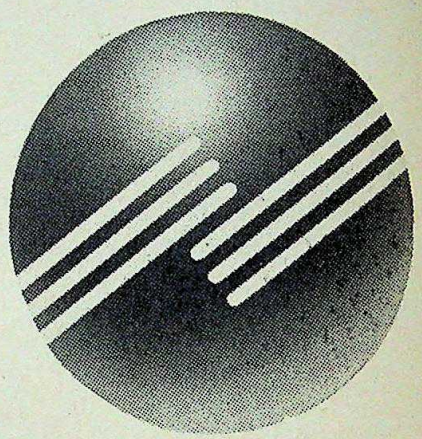
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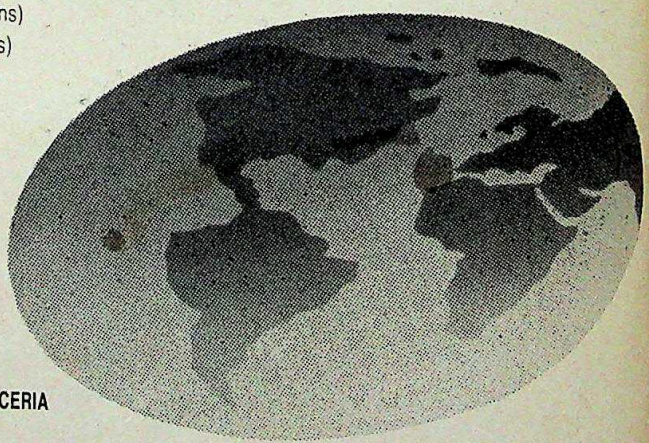
20 INTERSAN (Sanitary Articles)
52 ESPOSIZIONE INTERNAZIONALE DEL CICLO E MOTOCICLO (Cycle, Motorcycle)
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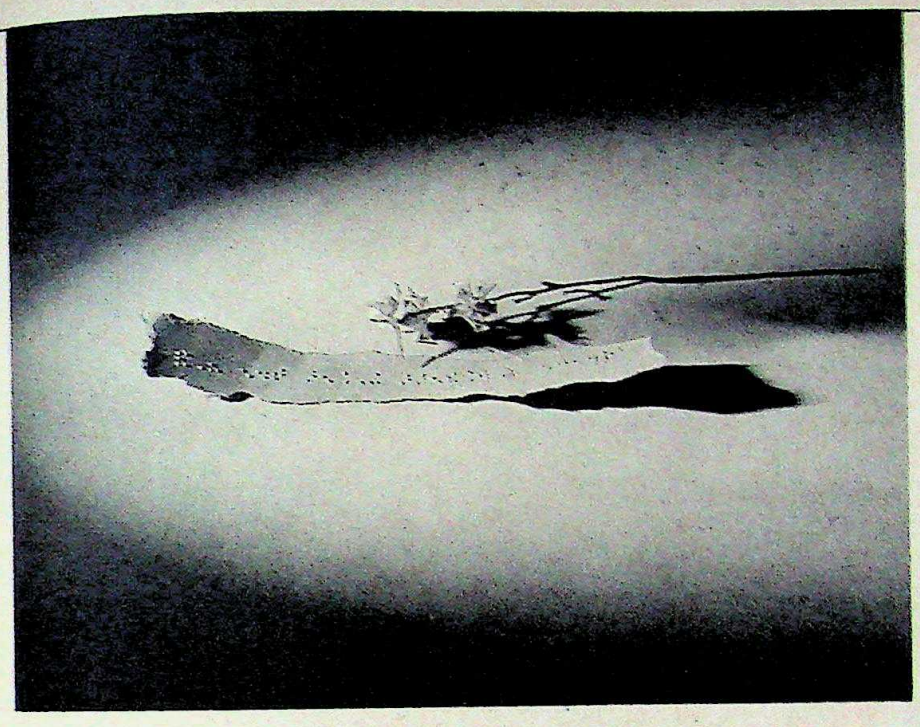


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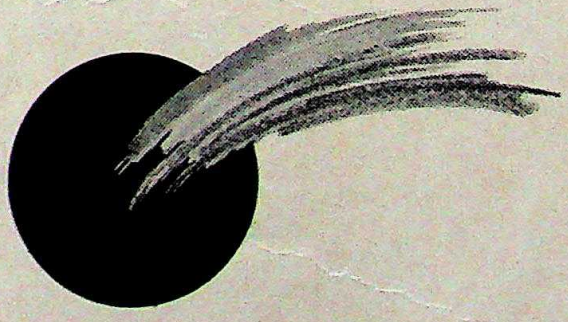
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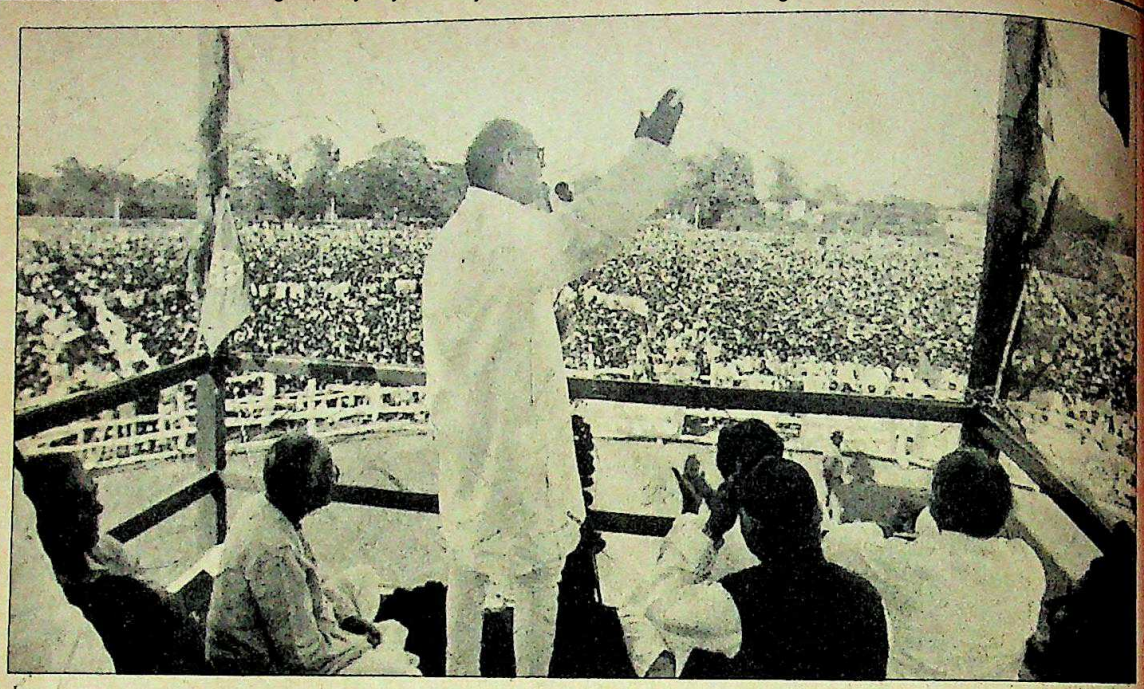
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Singh speaking at a rally in Purnia

BIHAR

Back to the People

V.P. Singh gives a clarion call for class war



EVER since he walked out of Rajiv Gandhi's government three years ago, V.P. Singh has been indulging in leftist rhetoric. That he was bringing social justice to the downtrodden is how he justified his tumultuous Mandal decision too. But only now, during his well-received tour of Bihar last fortnight, has he given a clarion call for class war. The plunge might have become expedient for the ousted prime minister looking for an effective platform. And clearly, the choice of places and the tone of his speeches declared that he was launching an election campaign.

Accompanied by Chief Minister Laloo Prasad Yadav, Singh spoke at rallies in towns like Purnia, Kishanganj, Saharsa, Sitamarhi, Munger and Sasaram which are dominated by the backward classes and minorities. The two Mandal messiahs did not mince words when they said that now onwards the fight would be between the haves and the have-nots.

Singh, for the first time, also shared a public platform with the Left parties, thus initiating a new polarisation and realignment of forces: he and the Left will now fight Congress(I) on the one hand and the BJP on the other. The alliance will improve the Left's stock in the north and Singh will have his secular and pro-poor credentials reinforced.

The Raja of Manda couldn't have chosen a better state than caste-ridden and politically turbulent Bihar to fire the first salvo. He needed the mobilisation potential of Yadav, stronger after the confidence motion, who has been a consistent supporter. Together, they proved a potent combination as crowds surged at meeting after meeting, prompting Jaganand Singh, state power minister, to say: "The wheel of the Janata Dal will once again turn in Bihar creating a strong wave throughout the country."

The best response that Singh got was in the Kosi belt in which Saharsa, Khageria and Madhepura fall. At least one lakh people poured into Saharsa which is a stronghold of Yadavs, whom the chief minister has successfully wooed. Predictably, when Laloo Yadav asked the audience to raise their hands if they wanted Singh to return to power again, they stood up in enthusiastic response.

In Purnia, the crowd was smaller but the 'martyr' Singh generated sufficient enthusiasm even as a galaxy of leaders were present, including West Bengal Chief Minister Jyoti Basu, Ajit Singh and Ram Vilas Paswan. Yadav spoke for everybody when he thundered: "Advani toppled the Singh government over the Mandal report but nobody can stop us from implementing it." At Kishanganj, Singh hailed Yadav as a hero for "grounding the Ram rath and splitting the BJP on the question of support to the Janata Dal Government in Bihar".

Even in Sitamarhi, where Raghunath Jha, leader of the Janata Dal(S), has a strong base, the turnout was massive and spontaneous which indicates, according to observers, that the masses were in a mood to reject those whom Yadav called "back-stabbers".

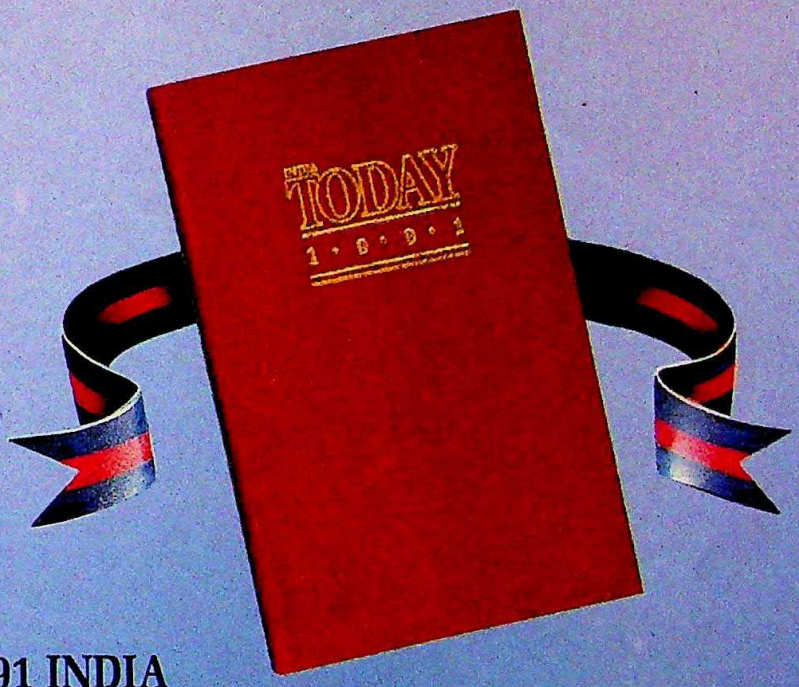
Sitamarhi also showed that whether or not the rabblerousing by Singh and Yadav succeeds in starting the class war, violent battles between rival political groupings are in the offing. A powerful bomb explosion at the Sitamarhi meeting killed one person and injured many. This was feared to be a reprisal for violent attacks earlier by the pro-reservationist supporters of Yadav on the residences of Raghunath Jha and Congress(I) leader Jagannath Mishra. "This is not politics but the advent of fascism in the state," said an irate Mishra. But for V.P. Singh, of course, the recent tour was a successful first step on the comeback trail.

—FARZAND AHMED

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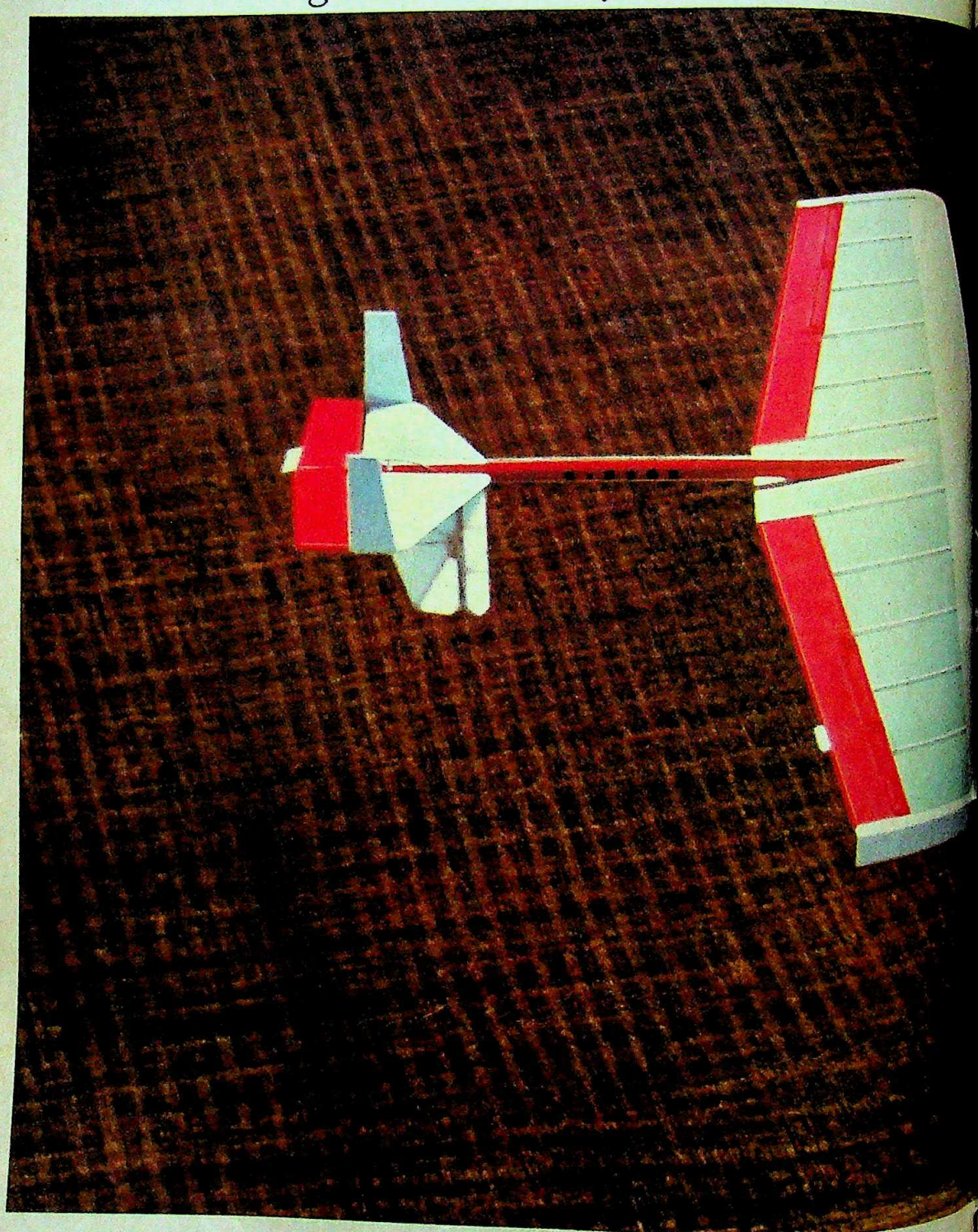
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THE STATES

Survival Strategies

New political alignments create ripples in four states

UTTAR PRADESH
Simmering Discontentment

WHEN the marriage of convenience finally took place last fortnight, both parties could barely conceal their distaste. Chief Minister Mulayam Singh Yadav had to swallow his pride and put aside his hatred of the Congress(I) in order to survive a vote of confidence, brought about by the VHP-BJP onslaught and the split in the Janata Dal.

The Congress(I) in turn had to stomach its antipathy towards Yadav, and follow the diktats of the high command to vote for him. UPCC(I) chief Rajendra Kumari Bajpai and former UPCC(I) chief Balram Singh Yadav went to the extent of saying that Congress(I) support for Yadav could prove 'suicidal' for the party in the long-run.

Yadav won the vote by a 78-vote margin even though former irrigation minister Reoti Raman Singh split the Janata Dal and emerged as the leader of the breakaway group. Of the 94 Congress(I) members in the House, 92 were present and all except Dharampal Singh voted for Yadav. Besides, all the 13 Bahujan Samaj Party members supported Yadav.

Yadav's brief honeymoon with the Left ended as the CPI and CPI(M) abstained. CPI(M) group leader Raj Kishore Singh told Yadav: "You will soon see the result of your newly-found alliance. The Congress has laid a trap for you and you have fallen into it."

The Congress(I)'s support naturally had a price tag attached to it. Yadav had to agree to the setting up of a judicial inquiry into the violence at Ayodhya and communal riots elsewhere in the state; the provision of an *ex-gratia* payment of Rs 1 lakh to the families of those who died in the violence; the building of the Ram temple on the foundation site; and economic criteria in reservations.

While Yadav clearly accepted these conditions in private, his only public commitment so far has been to institute an inquiry into the Ayodhya deaths. As for the Babri Masjid-Ram Janmabhoomi issue, Yadav reiterated his stance: "I am not against the building of a Lord Ram temple but at no cost will I allow the mosque to be touched. I am ready to sacrifice myself and the chief ministership for this."

As for the Congress(I), a foretaste of the attacks that will come when it decides to pull the rug from under Yadav's feet came in Narain Dutt Tiwari's speech to the Assembly. It was a scathing denunciation of the Government's 11-month performance. Tiwari said it had been a catalogue of failures.

Yadav managed to keep a smile during Tiwari's speech. The only time it showed signs of slipping was when Tiwari said: "We have no confidence in either the prime minister or the chief minister. We're only supporting you to see how well you manage the state."

In his speech, Yadav lashed out at V.P. Singh for conspiring with the BJP to oust him. The more Yadav abused Singh, the more smug looked Tiwari. In what was otherwise a carefully-worded speech, he was unable to resist a spasm of self-congratulation: "We are witnessing yet again the fact that any opposition based on anti-Congressism is doomed to fail."

The problem for the Congress(I) now that it has propped up Yadav's Government is to prevent the simmering discontent within the party from boiling over. The moment party workers and members start feeling that a move they opposed tooth and nail from the start is actually hurting their interests, the unrest will reach a dangerous pitch.





Yadav (top); and Reoti Raman Singh

GUJARAT
Successful Horse-trading

LAST fortnight, the political arena in Gujarat resembled a raucous auction. MLAs were the commodities on sale. And since there was only one bidder, there wasn't any doubt as to who would emerge victorious.

The crafty Gujarat Chief Minister, Chimanbhai Patel, whose pleasant rotundity belies his acumen, herded them in. At the end of it all, he was sitting pretty with 65 of the 70 Janata Dal MLAs behind him. The small group of tenacious V.P. Singh loyalists, led by former tourism minister Pravinsinh Jadeja and Jaspal Singh, bit the dust. Said Jadeja lamely: "The chief minister has been brazenly misusing resources at his disposal to woo the MLAs."





Chimanbhai Patel (left); and Pravinsinhji Jadeja

Chimanbhai went about it quite shamelessly: two dissident leaders, Liladhar Vaghela and Babubhai (who had contested the election recently for the post of the state Janata Dal president against Chimanbhai's nominee, Narpatsinh Chavda), were won over by the promise of ministerial berths. Both had, incidentally, been ignored by Chimanbhai when he had formed his ministry in March.

Then, Assembly Speaker Shashikant Lakhani, who was reportedly unhappy with the chief minister's

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decision to join hands with the Congress(I), was sworn in as a minister. Chimanbhai was also fortunate that Dinsha Patel, the road and building minister, a powerful leader who is known for his strong anti-Congress(I) stance, chose to go along with him in spite of muttering opposition from his supporters.

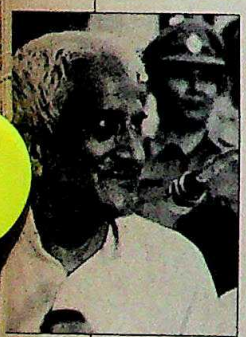
Chimanbhai, however, failed to crack the icing when he tried to rename his group the Janata Dal(S). Opposing his little ambition were four ministers, including Dinsha Patel. He also has to face the Nutan Navnirman Samiti, low-key at the moment, but potentially a danger to him, which threatens to expose those Janata Dal MLAs who are siding with the Congress(I) but who were elected on an anti-Congress(I) vote.

The BJP has 67 MLAs to Chimanbhai's 65. But the chief minister is backed by at least 107 legislators, 32 of the Congress(I) and 11 independents, well above the 92 that are required for a majority.

HARYANA
Devi Lal on the Defensive

IN Haryana, while Devi Lal's aberrant sons, Om Prakash Chautala and Ranjit Singh, are busy feuding, the ground is slipping from under their feet. The Hukum Singh Government has been reduced to a minority, with

Hukum Singh (left); and Banarasi Das Gupta





the Janata Dal(S) having only 41 members in a 86-member House.

Last fortnight, 16 members of the Janata Dal elected former chief minister Banarasi Das Gupta as their leader. In a last-ditch effort to save the Government, the chief minister, a Chautala nominee, inducted as many as 31 MLAs—or 80 per cent of the legislature party—into his ministry.

Further, former chief minister Bansi Lal, who considers his status of "dissident Congressman" as an electoral advantage, is currently riding the crest of a popular wave. Even after the Congress(I)'s extending support to the Janata Dal(S) at the Centre, Bansi Lal has not let up on his attack on Devi Lal's family. Chandra Shekhar will find himself in a bind about the Meham violence, which is now being investigated by Justice Dinshaw P. Madon.

All of Devi Lal's allies in his campaign in 1987—the BJP, CPI and CPI(M)—have now withdrawn their support to the Hukum Singh Government. The only support that his embattled family can look forward to now is from the Congress(I), although in that case Bansi Lal may find it difficult to remain in the party.

BIHAR
Yadav Romps Home

ON November 22, when Bihar Chief Minister Laloo Prasad Yadav came to the Bihar legislature complex for a vote of confidence in the special session of the 324-member Assembly, he did not have the worried look of one on trial.

In fact, as thousands of people, mostly villagers, thronged the premises, Yadav strode in confidently, and took the battle to his opponents. Said he: "This vote of confidence is necessitated because both leaders of the Opposition, Jagannath Mishra and Janata Dal(S) leader Raghunath Jha, have threatened to topple my government." Countered Mishra: "We never said that this government is in a minority. We want President's Rule imposed because this government has spread chaos in the state."

But when Yadav moved the motion, the pawns were set. The 39-member BJP unit, which had withdrawn support to Yadav, split vertically with 12 of its members, led by dissident Inder Namdhari Singh, the former state unit president now under suspension, protesting that they would not vote with the Congress(I). Two of them later returned to the House but 10 BJP men continued to defy the whip. Mishra's supporters threw paper missiles at Speaker Ghulam Sarwar, who was forced to vacillate between allowing a voice vote and raising hands or a secret ballot.

The results were clear: Yadav, with only 116 Janata Dal members, bagged 202 votes, while only 108 votes went against the motion. The 71 Congress(I) members, the Janata Dal breakaway group and the Chandra Shekhar loyalists (eight members), the BJP (a truncated 29 members) voting against. All the Janata Dal members, the independents, the Leftists and the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM) with a combined strength of 56 voted for Yadav.

Following the results, people raided the premises of the House, shouting "Laloo *bhai zindabad*". They also strung him with a garland weighing 51 kg, equal to his own weight. Yadav turned to Janata Dal chief, Ram Sunder Das, who had been projected as his successor but opted to be his supporter, and offered him the garland.

Yadav survived because the Congress(I) was at a strategic loss and Chandra Shekhar's supporters had second thoughts about deserting the party. Said Vijay Krishna, an MLA and a known Chandra Shekhar loyalist: "With all respect to Chandra Shekhar,

K.M. KISHAN



Laloo Yadav (left) with Jha

we differed from his political line. It was not merely a question of choosing between this and that. It was also a question of reviving the JP movement's spirit of anti-Congressism and the spirit of 1967 and 1977." The Congress(I) and Chandra Shekhar also tried to break the 19-member JMM by offering Shibu Soren, its strongman, a berth in the Central ministry but he refused. Even the tiny Indian People's Front (seven members) stood firm.

According to analysts, the political polarisation in Bihar shows that while the Janata Dal, with the backing of the backward castes and the minorities, will emerge stronger, the Congress(I) and the BJP will be marginalised as speaking for the urban people and the forward castes. —DILIP AWASTHI.

FARZAND AHMED and UDAY MAHURKAR

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BJP-VHP

Southern Tack

Hindutva brigade moves on

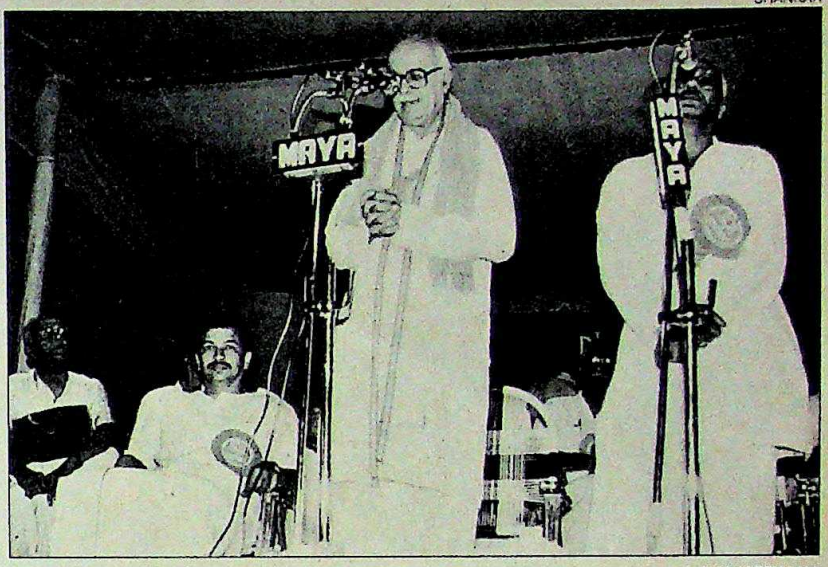
ON November 21, BJP President L.K. Advani started his highly-publicised, 41-day, all-states Bharat Yatra from Trivandrum and laid open for scrutiny his party's electoral game-plan. Having tossed Faizabad and Ayodhya's leftism, however easy-going, into history's dustbin on November 19, and converting the populace of the twin cities into shrill kar sewaks, he chose Trivandrum as a starting point for his odyssey with good reason.

The VHP has about 2,500 units in the state and the Trivandrum district alone had sent about 1,650 kar sewaks to Ayodhya. In Madurai, Kaushal Kishore, the RSS All-India Joint Propaganda Secretary, said that 500 to 1,000 kar sewaks would reach Ayodhya every day after December 6, and would offer *satyagraha* if denied permission to do kar sewa there. Some will be from Kerala, which has seen a resurgence in Hindu loyalty.

Even so Advani realises that the weakest link in the BJP's chain is Kerala, where a high literacy rate and a popular commitment to Marxism has kept the BJP and the RSS hobbled in terms of electoral support. To drill a hole in the dyke of the south, he has to strengthen the BJP's base in Kerala which is, as a fall-out of the Ayodhya issue, on the increase. Although the party's membership, which was around 1.25 lakh last year, has almost doubled, it is still not a potent political force that can translate its clout into assembly or parliamentary seats. But it has considerable nuisance value: in the last Lok Sabha elections, the BJP's canny game-playing ensured a rout of the Marxists.

In fact, it is clear what the party's main plank in the campaign for the next elections is going to be: the police excesses at Ayodhya, an issue the BJP will continuously use to strengthen its Hindu card. At his well-attended public meeting in Trivandrum, Advani spoke about how crores of Hindus were being subjected to "gross inequality by the politics of appeasement". He spoke about the "plight of Hindus" in Kashmir and Punjab and did his bit to raise hackles about the treatment meted out to kar sewaks in Ayodhya. If the BJP had its way, the elections would be held now, while the iron was still hot enough to strike. Advani, in fact, added that the other political parties scuttled the idea of elections as they were afraid the BJP stood to gain.

SHANKAR



SHYAM TEKWANI



Advani in Trivandrum (top); and Vijay Raje Scindia: fiery rhetoric

At another meeting organised by the Bharatheeya Abhibhashaka Parishad in Trivandrum, which was attended mainly by lawyers, Advani spoke about what he termed the "human rights violations" in Ayodhya. He attributed the growth of an aggressive Hindu psyche to the "pandering to the minorities" by successive governments since Independence.

The VHP is one with the BJP in the state. Says Neelakanthan Nair, president of the state unit of the VHP: "Youngsters have joined us in hordes in the last few months." To keep the tempo from flagging, Raman Pillai, state president of the BJP, organised his own Rath Yatra, touring 130 of the 140 assembly constituencies between October 11 and October 26. This was the first time that the party collected enough courage to attempt a mass contact programme in this state that has for years cultivated a *laissez faire* attitude towards religious matters. Hindu Malayalees have never viewed minorities with the kind of blinkered antagonism that prevails in north India.

In any case, Advani received a hero's welcome when he reached Ayodhya on November 19. There were teeming crowds and an all-regalia guard of honour at the PWD inspection house, and later a VIP escort throughout his journey from Ayodhya to Lucknow when the visit was over. Said an overwhelmed Advani: "What happened in Ayodhya was not just the beginning of the kar sewa. It was the start of the foundation of the Hindu *Rashtra*." In other words, the strategy for the BJP-VHP in the coming months.

—RAMESH MENON with DILIP AWASTHI

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ANDHRA PRADESH

Violent Vendetta

Politically motivated gang wars continue



A gang war abetted, if not backed, by opposing political parties in Vijayawada in Andhra Pradesh came up for reckoning the day before Nehru Jayanti last month with the brutal slaying of two Congress(I) supporters in the midst of morning peak hour traffic. And the day after, Chief Minister Dr M. Chenna Reddy, on a visit to the city to launch a slum improvement programme aided by a British overseas development agency, was greeted with a Congress(I)-led bandh and black flags.

Politics and crime have been a standing staple of life in Vijayawada and the two victims, Potharaju and Shaikh Raheemuddin, were no white knights. Potharaju's record of crime dates back to 1975; he faced charges of murdering three men. Raheemuddin was known to have been one of his accomplices in various crimes. They were on their way to the local court to appear in a criminal case when they were done in.

The two-wheeler in which the two were riding was hit from behind by a car without number-plates, on the Ring Road near the campus of the University of Health Sciences. Seeing armed men in the car, the two started running but were chased and hacked to death.

Local Congress(I) activists took to the streets as soon as word of the double murder spread. They ransacked several shops in the town before the Vijayawada (East) Congress(I) MLA, Vangaveeti Ratna Kumari, called for a bandh the next day. Ratna Kumari also alleged that the supporters of the Telugu Desam MLA, Rajasekhar alias Nehru, were responsible for the killings.

Incidentally, Rajasekhar is the principal accused in the murder of Ratna Kumari's husband, former Congress(I) MLA Vangaveeti Mohan Ranga Rao, in December 1988. Ranga Rao's murder had triggered caste violence in four coastal districts of the state and had deepened the rift between the Kamma and Kapu communities. Ratna Kumari herself is a Kamma by birth but her late husband had managed to herd the volatile Kapus into the Congress(I) corral, and she herself has been trying to consolidate this solid vote bank.

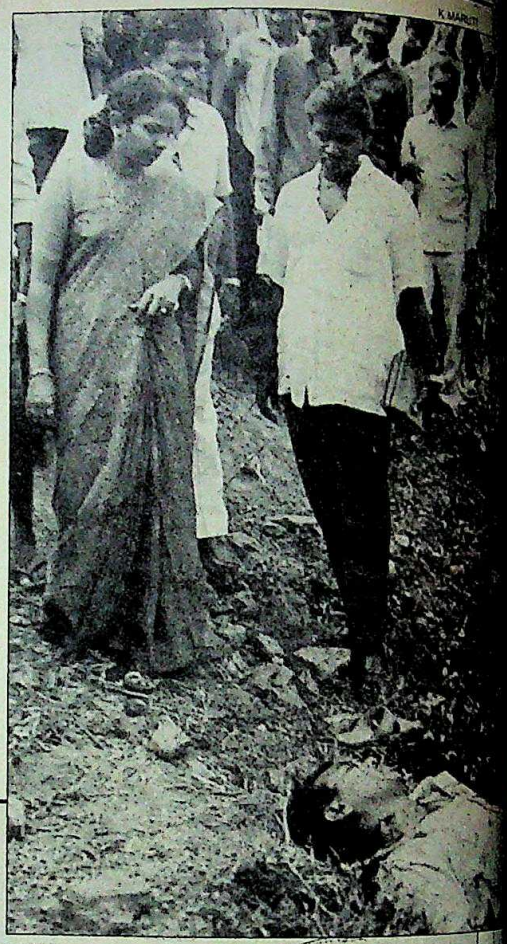
Says Ratna Kumari: "Nehru and his men are trying to weaken our base by murder and swearing revenge." But Vijayawada's Police Commissioner, R.P. Singh, vehemently denies that political vendetta was behind the killings. What he does not pay adequate attention to is the fact that the Congress(I) has routinely backed criminal elements in the city. The Congress(I), however, is not alone in this skulduggery: almost all political parties active in Vijayawada protect different criminal gangs.

Police investigations reveal that the prime suspect in the double murder is the CPI-backed Babu Rao, who had himself escaped homicidal attempts plotted by Potharaju and some associates. They also do not rule out a commonality of interests between Babu Rao and Telugu Desam's Nehru.

Chief Minister Chenna Reddy was, predictably, displeased with Ratna Kumari's crass show of clout on, of all days, Jawaharlal Nehru's birthday. But there was little he could do apart from ordering the police to put her under virtual house arrest during his visit to the town. She described her incarceration as "an insult" and, as soon as she was allowed to move about, flew to New Delhi to lodge a complaint with the Congress(I) President, Rajiv Gandhi. She apparently said that dissident MPs and MLAs would demand the replacement of Chenna Reddy with a more "benevolent" chief minister. Chenna Reddy, on his part, told Rajiv that indiscipline had to be checked and that Ratna Kumari could be no exception.

Rajiv's hands are, however, tied. He cannot afford to chastise either Chenna Reddy or Ratna Kumari, whose late husband so assiduously cultivated the Kapus, and she herself commands considerable support among them. It is more than likely that the killers of Potharaju and Raheemuddin will go untraced and the incident will remain an innocuous footnote in the history of politically-backed gang wars in this trading town on the placid Krishna river.

—AMARNATH K. MENON



Congress(I) MLA Ratna Kumari at the murder site

Almost all political parties in Vijayawada protect criminal gangs that extort crores from traders every year.

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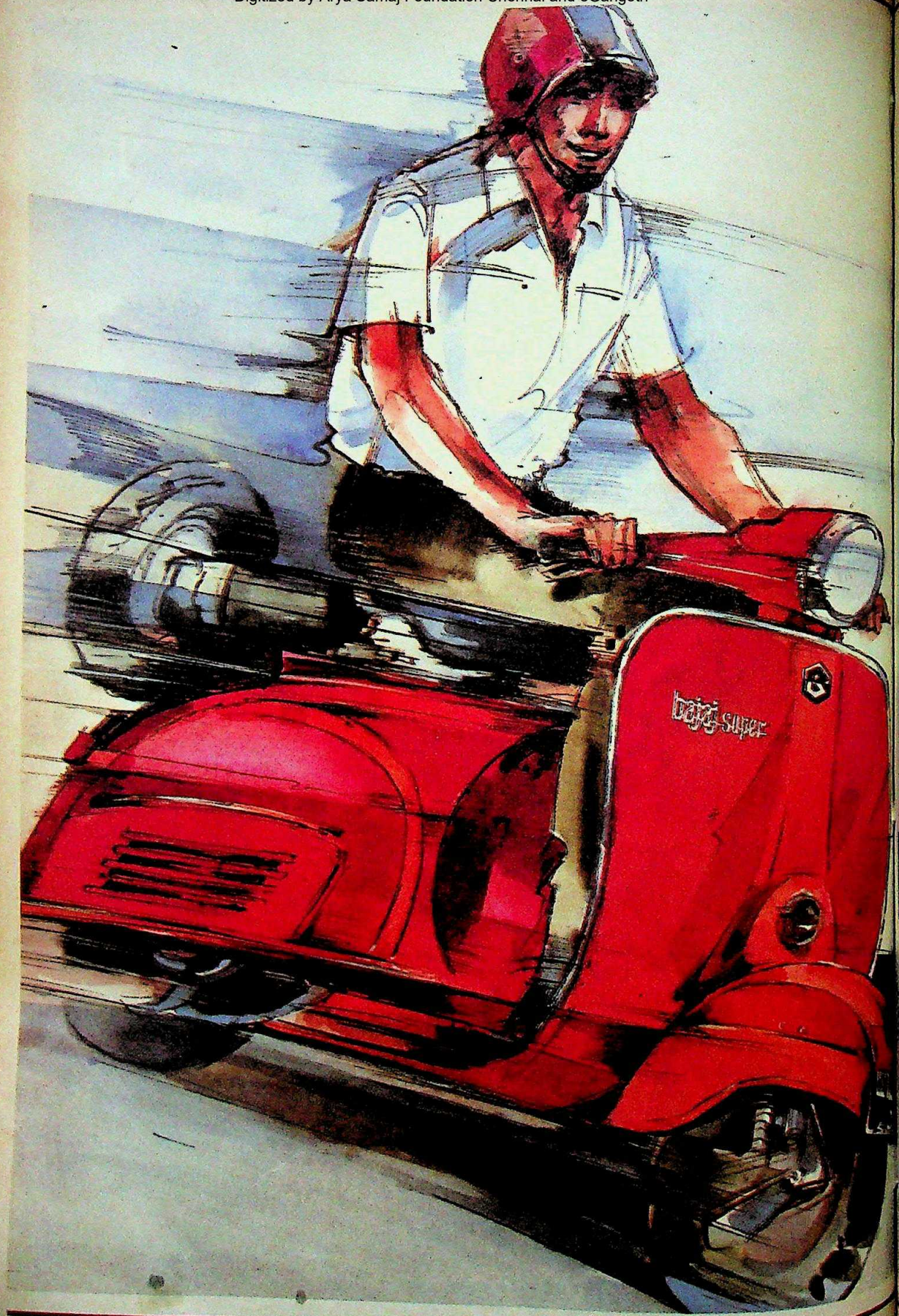
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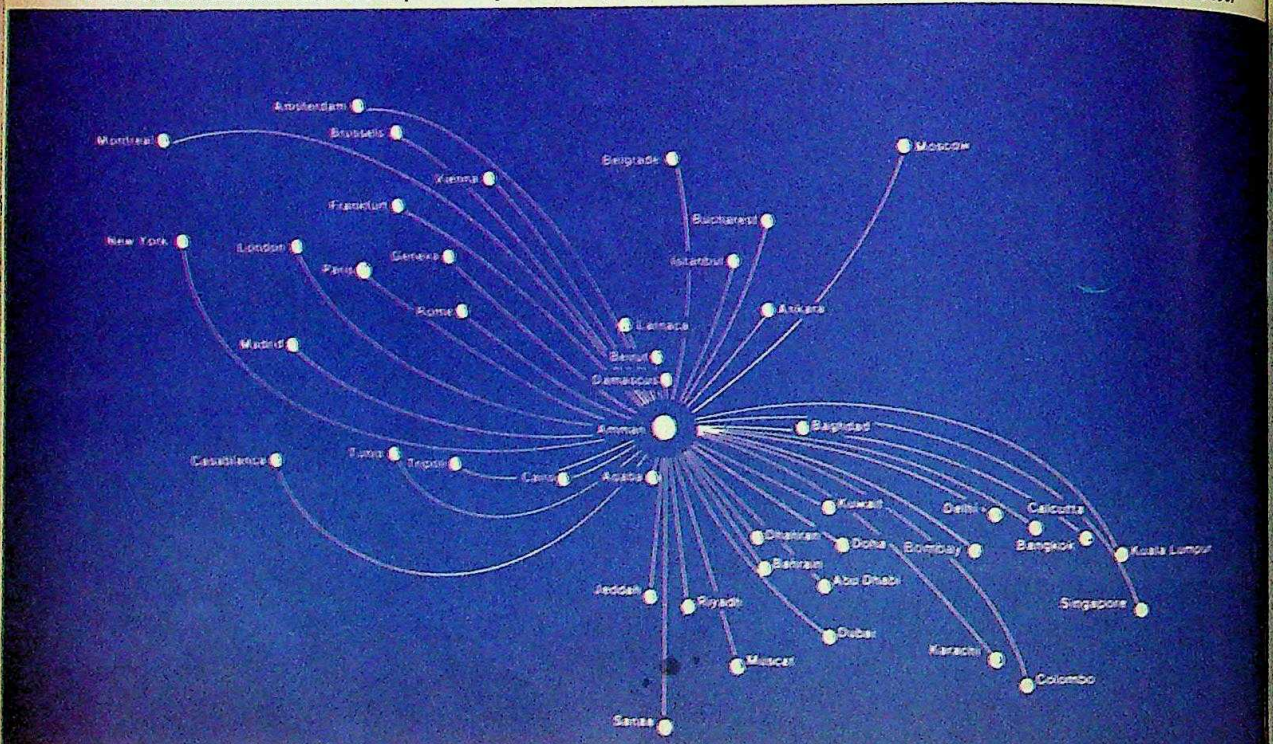
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GUJARAT

Shock Alliance

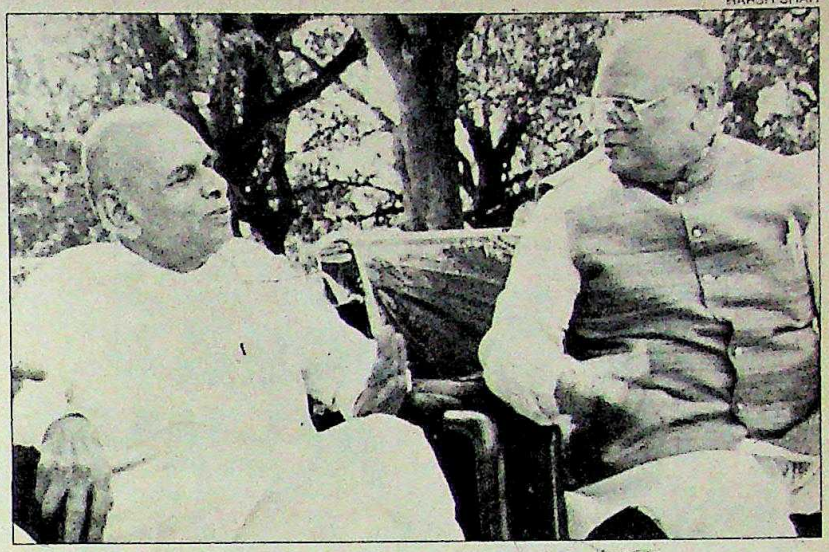
Babubhai joins Chimanbhai



THE past few weeks have seen so many politicians eating their words and embracing their mortal rivals that their ability to shock the public has now been completely exhausted. But the decision of the former chief minister of Gujarat, Babubhai Jashbhai Patel, foremost advocate of Gandhian and value-based politics, to join the cabinet of his arch enemy, Chief Minister Chimanbhai Patel, has left many people speechless.

Gandhian workers have been extremely dismayed. For them, Babubhai's conversion is a case of the Ganga merging with a filthy sewer. Babubhai had always been held as a symbol of the clean and ethical politician. While Chimanbhai was his antithesis: a man identified with all that was murky and unclean in Indian politics.

HARSH SHAH



Chimanbhai Patel (right) with Babubhai Patel: forging a new alliance

The rivalry between the two politicians goes back a long way. Ever since the Congress split in 1969 the two men have been fierce opponents. Babubhai joined the faction that was led by Morarji Desai while Chimanbhai, as was to be expected, joined the Mrs Indira Gandhi faction.

From that time on, Babubhai has never wavered in his opposition to Chimanbhai and the Congress(I). Interestingly, it was Chimanbhai's fall in

VIRENDRA DAYAL

Power Games

AFTER an illustrious career at the UN spanning a quarter of a century, Virendra Dayal was all set to scale a final peak of glory as the UN high commissioner for refugees. Instead, Dayal has spent the last month trading insults with the US—which has opposed his nomination—and fending off an attack that was actually aimed at someone else.

For the past 11 years Dayal, India's most successful international bureaucrat has been chief aide to the UN Secretary-General, Xavier Perez de Cuellar. It was perhaps understandable, therefore, that Cuellar nominated Dayal to fill the post of high commissioner for refugees when it became vacant. But to his surprise, Dayal suddenly found the might of the US bearing down on him. The Americans made it clear they would not tolerate Dayal in the post and succeeded in their aim.

His response was a far cry from the niceties that usually flow from the mouths of career diplomats. In a blistering attack, he denounced the Americans for getting western nations to monopolise the prestigious post and accused the West of racist behaviour. Said Dayal: "They prefer a second-class politician from the First World to a first-class civil servant from the Third World." Making no attempt to hide his bitterness, Dayal said the US and other western nations were guilty of treating the post as their own little fiefdom.



Dayal: victimised

Dayal's fury may well have been justified. But sources at the UN say Dayal simply happened to be in the firing line of a shot actually aimed to hurt Cuellar.

The US was apparently angry at Cuellar's recent report on the Palestinian uprising in the Israeli-occupied West Bank. As Israel's patron saint, it was discomfited by the critical report, particularly at a time when it was struggling to keep the Arab members of its anti-Iraq coalition happy. These sources say it was no coincidence that the day after Cuellar made his preference for Dayal known to American officials at the UN, an article appeared in *The New York Times* accusing Cuellar of 'cronyism'.

He was also criticised for failing to respect the convention that, while he is entitled to nominate a person for the job, protocol requires that he should consult those countries which have been involved in major refugee relief efforts.

At 55, Dayal still has five more years to serve as a UN employee. But Cuellar's tenure as secretary-general is ending next year and it's thought unlikely that he will seek another term.

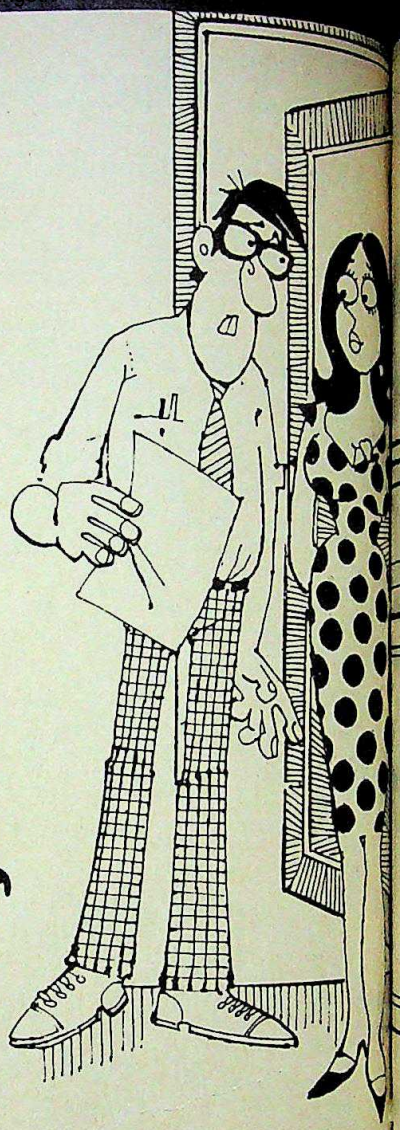
So what lies in store for Dayal, having badmouthed the most powerful members of the UN? Dayal is not too optimistic about his future. He told INDIA TODAY he would plough on with his responsibilities by "separating my own miseries from the work in hand." And, like all politicians and diplomats suddenly deprived of the glories of high office, he intends to spend more time with his family and tending his garden.

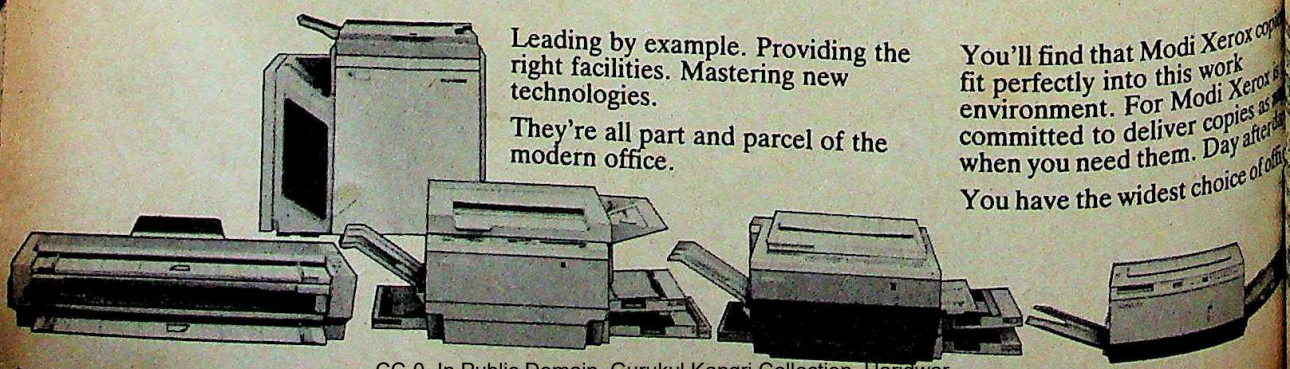
—AMRIT KAKARIA

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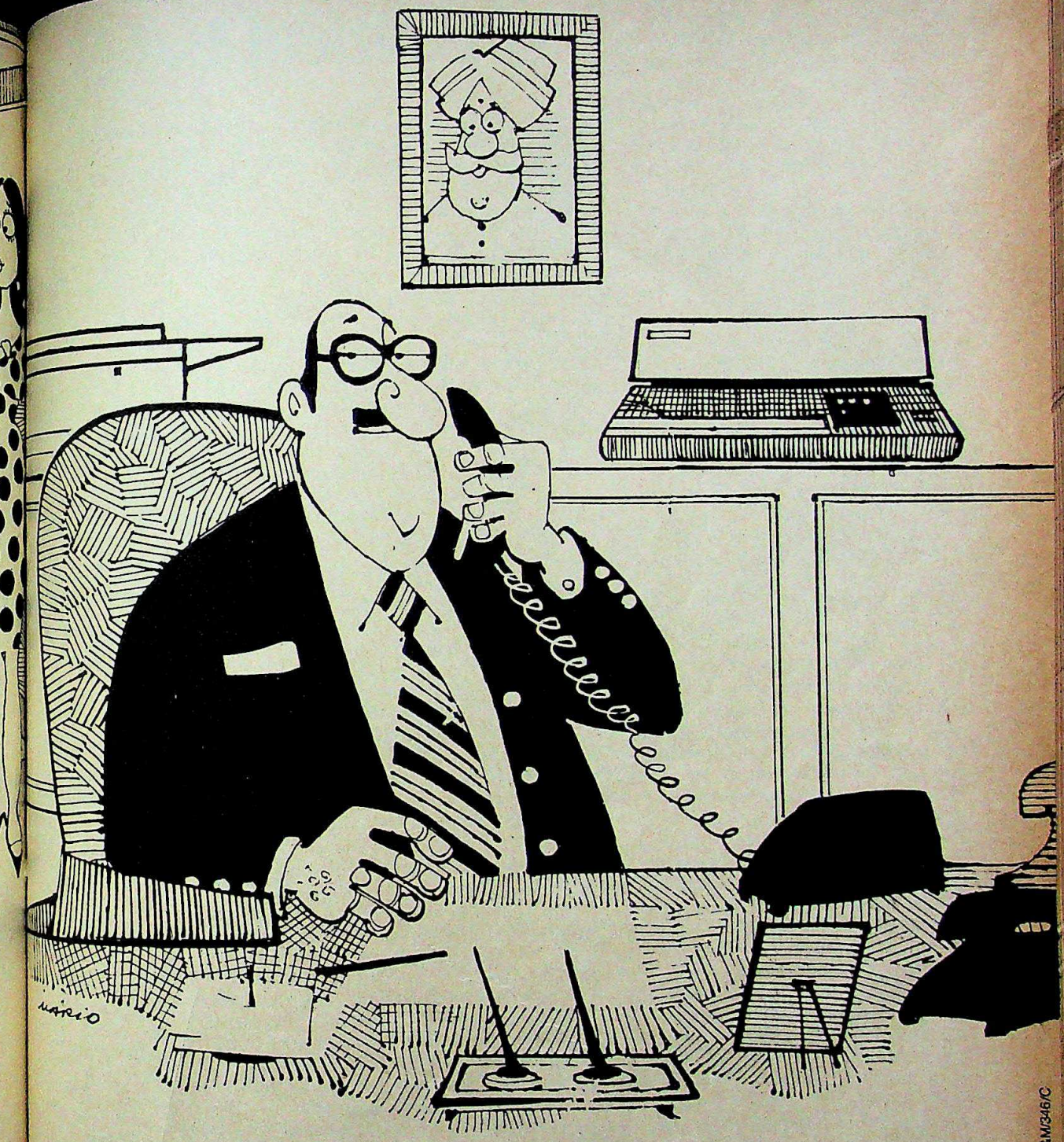
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the famous Navnirman furore against his corrupt rule that led to Babubhai becoming chief minister in 1974 in the first non-Congress government Gujarat had ever seen.

When the breakaway Janata Dal(S) group led by Chandra Shekhar formed the new Government at the Centre, Chimanbhai was one of its chief architects. First, though, he managed to weather the storm in his own state by quickly securing the support of the Congress(I) when the BJP withdrew its support. He also brought Babubhai, who had stood as an independent, into his cabinet.

This was an undoubted coup for Chimanbhai. In one stroke he disarmed a powerful rival who could have been a rallying point for his critics. More importantly for someone with a notorious lust for power, he also acquired some badly-needed moral legitimacy. Keshubhai Patel, leader of the BJP in the state Assembly, remarks: "Chimanbhai was in search of credibility. By allowing himself to be used as a shield by the chief minister and by succumbing to power, Babubhai sounded the death-knell of value-based politics."

Chimanbhai's reasons for winning over his rival are obvious. But why did Babubhai decide to throw in his lot with a much-reviled opponent? First, his weakness for the controversial Narmada dam project which he has long supported. He was told that he could be in charge of it. Second, his supporters say that it was crucial for all secular forces in the state at this stage to unite against the BJP's communalism. In his own defence, Babubhai says: "I joined Chimanbhai's cabinet only on the condition that I would be given the Narmada portfolio. If the project is completed in time, Gujarat will save hundreds of crores of rupees. Moreover, I'm against President's Rule and did not want to create any political instability."

Whatever the motives for his about-face, the ramifications of his decision to join forces with Chimanbhai go beyond his own reputation and supporters. The chief minister's opponents fear that he will enjoy a dangerously free rein now that his most notable critic has been silenced. The BJP's enemies are disappointed that, as an independent, Babubhai won't be around to restrain an increasingly strident force. In short, another prominent, "value-based" politician has bitten the dust.

—UDAY MAHURKAR

A Political Babel

INSIDE EYE BY INDERJIT BADHWAR

IT'S a mad, mad, mad world out there. And it's driving anyone trying to figure it out crazy. Logic, reason, principle, debate, discourse, rumination, reflection, vision, have been driven out of the nation's political life like animals out of a forest fire. Positions and stands have given way to the grotesquely changing postures of a macabre pantomime.

Enter, first, the Mandal labyrinth. Rajiv Gandhi argues eloquently against the new reservations policy in Parliament. But his party's all for it. The BJP's Hindu consolidation strategy quivered like a piece of jelly hit by a storm when V.P. Singh announced Mandal. But, of course, L.K. Advani is all for Mandal. Mandal was the beginning of the end of Singh's tempestuous government, admit his closest aides. But his Janata Dal is making it its main campaign plank. The Left, who have always condemned the Kulaks—the intermediary cultivating castes—as class enemies are now jumping on the Mandal bandwagon to give them government job quotas. And the new messiah of reservations—V.P. Singh—parts with fellow Mandalophile Mulayam Singh Yadav after he raises Uttar Pradesh's government job quota for backward classes to 27 per cent.

Want to figure out the Ram temple tangle? The pro-Ramrajya party—Congress—circa election-eve, 1989—which had described the BJP then as a "nationalist party" likens Advani's Rath Yatra to fascistic fundamentalism and accuses Singh, who arrested Advani, of having made a secret deal with Hindu fundamentalists. The BJP, oddly, calls its Yatra a step towards "national integration". And the Communists who supported Mulayam Singh's anti-communalism rallies refuse to support him in the Vidhan Sabha. And everybody still choruses that the Ram Mandir should be built.

Illustration by PRANAB DUTTA



But what to make of the rift between Mulayam and V.P. Singh? Both are arch-reservationists. They jointly attempted to stop the Hindutva Yatra on its tracks. V.P. Singh's government cancelled trains, and gave Mulayam all the paramilitary forces he needed to blockade Uttar Pradesh and arrest the kar sewaks. But now Singh and his former home minister attack Mulayam for provoking a Hindu backlash through his overzealous anti-communal rallies. Yet, Singh insists his government fell because of his intrepid stand on secularism. Mulayam's response? He denounces Singh for having made a secret compromise with the Vishwa Hindu Parishad.

Having once dismissed Mulayam as no more than a goon, Congress now hails him for the strong measures he took against the Ram sewaks. Yet, the secular Congress(I) sets conditions: an inquiry into police brutality against the sewaks; modification of the reservations policy; negotiations for construction of the Ram temple at the *shilanyas* site.

Muslim leaders condemn V.P. Singh for trying to make a last-minute compact with the BJP and RSS. Hindu groups pounce on him for succumbing to Muslim fundamentalists and withdrawing the October 20 ordinance. He criticises both for intransigence and yet champions the Muslim vote bank. Mulayam is condemned by the BJP as the butcher of Ayodhya; and by Muslims as a man who was not serious about preventing damage to the Babri Masjid and later allowing kar sewaks to perform *darshan*. Who's pro-Mandir, who pro-Mulayam and anti-VP, pro or anti-Mandal, pro or anti-secular, pro or anti-national integration only the Gods can figure out.

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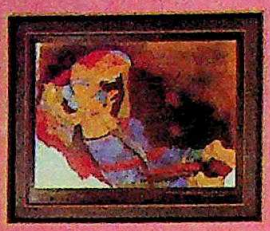
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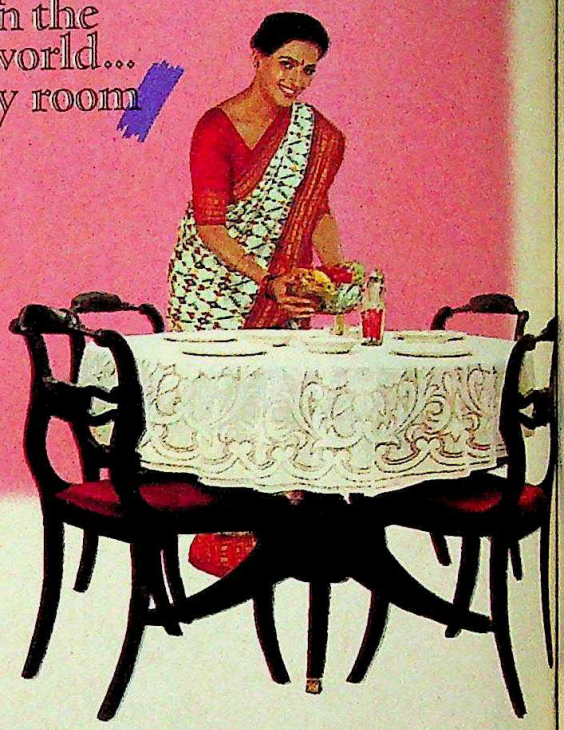
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KARNATAKA

Dubious Move

Bangarappa inducts his boys



THE Chief Minister of Karnataka seems to be a man in a great hurry. Since his appointment last month, he's been working overtime to consolidate his position. In the past fortnight alone he has transferred 32 senior members of the IAS and packed the Cabinet with his own boys.

Out of the 13 new ministers who joined the seven appointed earlier, only three belong to the powerful Lingayat and Vokkaliga communities. The rest come from the Scheduled Castes, the minorities and politically backward Brahmins and Rajputs.

MUSHTAQ AHMED



Bangarappa is facing flak over the appointment of his cronies as ministers and the mass transfer of IAS officers.

What has however raised the hackles of his critics is the age and inexperience of the new ministers. The average age is 38 and only one minister is over 50. Bangarappa's critics within the Congress(I) explain this massive injection of new blood by pointing to his desire to create a loyal following.

The new ministers' inexperience made Congress(I) MLA A.K. Subbaiah exclaim in despair: "I am totally disappointed with the expansion. It is impossible to give a clean and efficient administration with the new ministers."

A prime example of inexperience is B. Shivamurthy, 34, who has been given the excise portfolio. He was Bangarappa's trusted lieutenant

UTTAR PRADESH

Wooing Game

UTTAR Pradesh Chief Minister Mulayam Singh Yadav has emulated his current adversary, V.P. Singh, by playing the Mandal card in the face of threats to his position and political future. The timing gives Yadav away. The ordinance raising the quota for the OBCs from 15 to 27 per cent was promulgated on November 12, the day 110 Janata Dal MLAs met the state governor demanding the chief [illegible] dismissal. Besides d[illegible] rival faction, Yada[illegible] aimed at stealing [illegible] from the BJP and t[illegible] are all set to resum[illegible] Ayodhya in Decer[illegible]

However, sig[illegible] Mandal decision[illegible] ang on Yadav. T[illegible] tion agitation i[illegible] flared up again[illegible] High Court has[illegible] and the Har[illegible] against Yadav[illegible] lose now. Besi[illegible] in Delhi, Cha[illegible] averse to pure[illegible] tas. And the M[illegible] increase the[illegible] ervations o[illegible] Yadav Gove[illegible]

The students' violent reaction to the Mandal announcement came immediately: boycotting of classes, burning of buses and public property, two self-immolation deaths and many more suicide attempts. This prompted the closure of many schools and colleges in the state. Tempers cooled down a bit when the high court gave a stay on the reservations till December 6. "The chief minister took the step knowing that in the wake of the Supreme Court stay earlier, the high court would

An anti-reservation procession



stay the reservations in the state," said Reoti Raman Singh, the Janata Dal leader.

Overtly, Yadav made his intention to go the whole hog on Mandal crystal clear. As he said in the Vidhan Sabha: "There cannot be any compromise on the 27 per cent reservation for OBCs. I am strongly in favour of reservation in the educational field and will like to make provisions soon."

The ordinance lists 55 OBCs which will get 27 per cent reservation in all categories of state government jobs. Yadav thus wants to cut across the OBC support which V.P. [illegible]ngh has cornered as well as stop [illegible]backward castes from rally[illegible]round the *Hindutva* protago[illegible]s. Whether he will succeed is [illegible]body's guess.

[illegible]Meanwhile, Yadav stands to [illegible] the Harijan support. The [illegible]a for the Scheduled Castes [illegible]so far been 25 and 35 per cent [illegible]ectively in class III and class [illegible] government jobs, which [illegible]ld get curtailed if the court [illegible]ts that the total reservations [illegible]not exceed 50 per cent.

[illegible]The nemesis for Yadav may [illegible]prove to be the opening of two [illegible]ts—Mandal and mandir—as [illegible] already extended state ad[illegible]istration may not be able to [illegible]e with the resulting strife.

—DILIP AWASTHI

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during his years in the wilderness but has no administrative experience. His appointment has predictably prompted speculation that the chief minister will actually be controling the portfolio himself.

If the Cabinet appointments have created consternation about Bangarappa's commitment to providing an efficient administration, his reshuffle of the IAS has set the alarm bells ringing. Thirty-two senior IAS officers have been transferred. And worse was a move to rehabilitate former finance secretary J. Alexander who was chairman of a joint sector company. Alexander had been suspended by the Veerendra Patil government after the Lok Ayukta found he had assets worth more than one crore, last June. Said a senior bureaucrat: "The Government's action will definitely halt the anti-corruption drive launched by the Patil government."

When Bangarappa was appointed on October 17, fears were expressed in some circles about his closeness to leaders of the toddy-tapping community—the Idiga, to which he belongs. The fears that he might be soft on the liquor lobby have been revived with the transfer in the last fortnight of G.K. Sangameshwar, managing director, Mysore Sales International Ltd (MSIL). Under the Patil government, MSIL was in-charge of canalising the sale of Indian-made liquor in order to prevent the evasion of excise duty by liquor companies. Sangameshwar had tackled the job with determination.

It might not be a wonder any longer if even Congressmen start nostalgically recalling the Patil tenure.

—C.B. YESHVANTH KUMAR

BOTTOMLINE BY D. BUNKER

Cabinet Capers

PAPER pundits like Giri Lal Jain who are predicting the early demise of the new Government may yet wind up eating humble pau-bhaji. *Chandra Shekhar is clearly no Charan Singh. It may be unclear what he really is. But the Bihari politician is not known as the 'Bizard of Bhondsi' for nothing. One indicator is the first cabinet meeting. Here's how it went.*

Chandra Shekhar: Is everybody here?

Cabinet Secretary: No sir, half the ministers are still wandering around South Block looking for the cabinet room. Dr Sanjay Singh went into the ladies room by mistake and hasn't come out yet....

Chandra Shekhar: Never mind, let's get started. We have no time to waste. What's on the agenda?

Asoke Sen: I've been trying to read this agenda paper but it's all a blank. The same thing happened to me at the swearing-in...,

Chandra Shekhar: That's because the agenda paper is blank. Incidentally, why am I the only one with a high-back chair?

Devi Lal: I ordered it. After all, I've been telling everybody you have more spine than V.P. Singh.

Voice from the rear: I have an objection.

Chandra Shekhar: We have no time for objections. It's taken us two weeks to call our first cabinet meeting. Let's get down to business. Who's first?

Voice from the rear: I should have been....

Yashwant Sinha: I think the top priority has to be our financial situation. We have to chalk out a strategy for self-reliance.

Chandra Shekhar: Our finances are no problem.

Yashwant Sinha: Really? How come?

Chandra Shekhar: You said it yourself. Reliance.

Voice from the rear: How are you going to sort out the Ayodhya issue without my advice....

Chandra Shekhar: There's an old saying about using a thief to catch a thief. That's what we'll do. I've employed a holy man to deal with their holy men. He has plenty of experience in this sort of thing.

Voice from the rear: May we know who?

Chandra Shekhar: He's quite unknown. In fact, his name is quite similar to mine. Chandraswami.

Subramaniam Swamy: Perfect choice. A man after my own heart. Can I use him for Commerce? Between us, we can bring in all this wonderful modern technology.

Chandra Shekhar: What modern technology?

Subramaniam Swamy: Hidden tape recorders. Telephone taps. Miniature cameras. Bugs.

Voice from the rear: This government isn't going to last long if those are the kind of priorities being fixed.

Maneka Gandhi: That's why I've been given environment.

Voice from the rear: What has that got to do with survival?

Maneka Gandhi: My job will be to protect an endangered species.

Chandra Shekhar: the way, who's is that e from the rear?

Cabinet Secretary: eep Dhankar, Sir. ried to stop him but id he would accept ng less than a cabi- t.

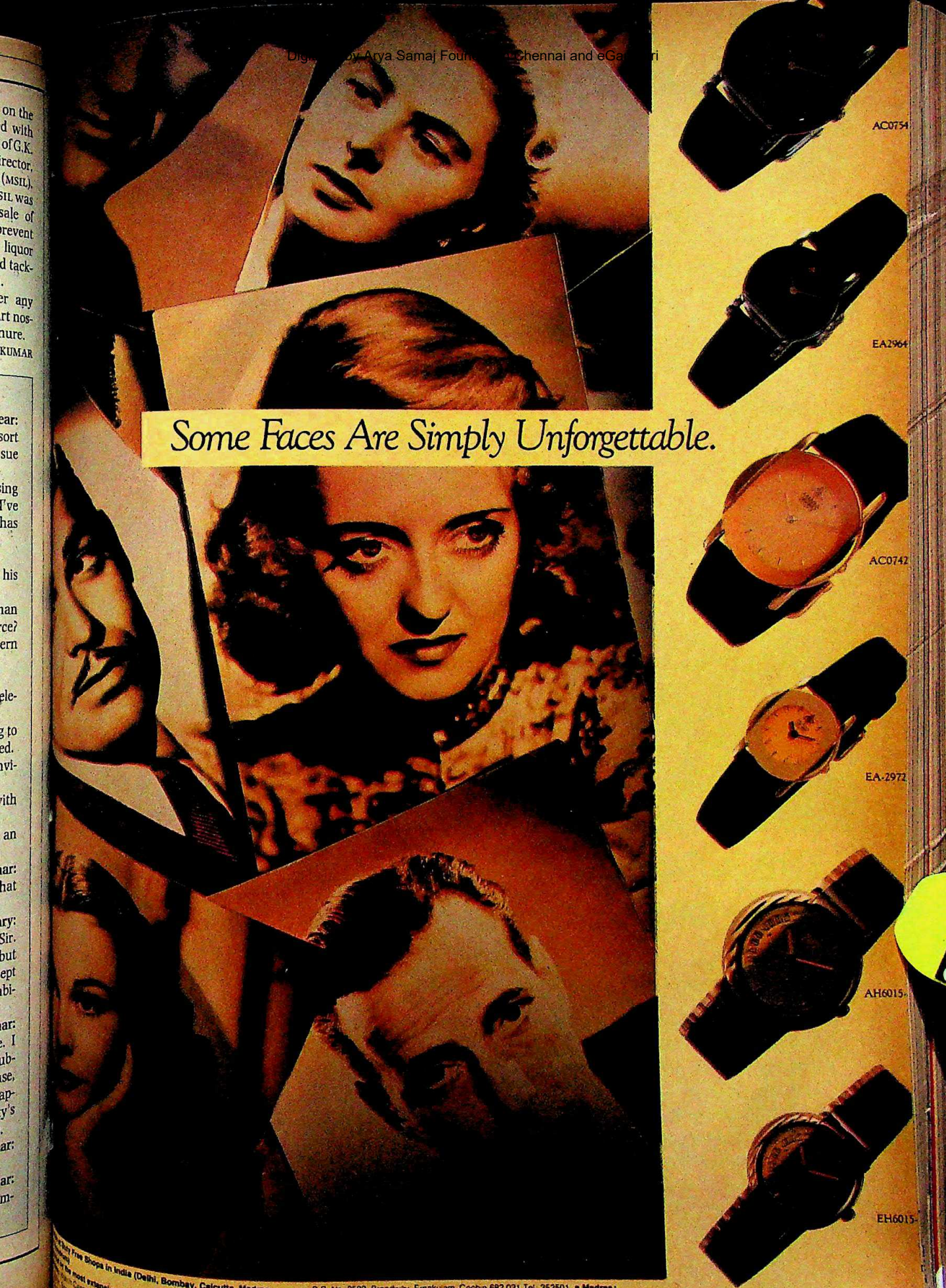
ndra Shekhar: him at once. I ave such insub- on. In any case, to get the ap- f the party's committee.

from the rear: that?

ra Shekhar: dhi, Chidam- awan....

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Shalima

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Should the Railways spend Rs. 2500 crores

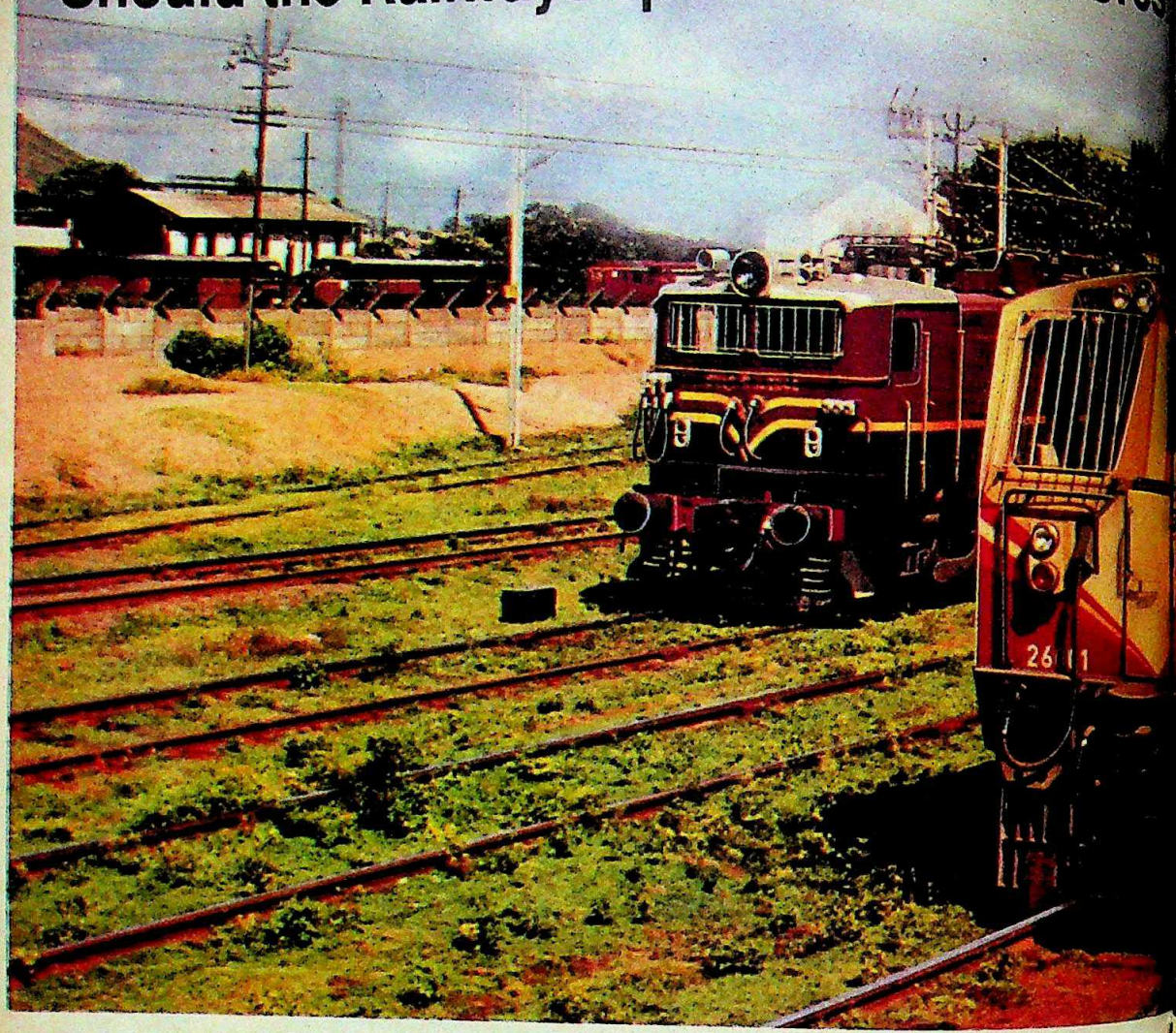


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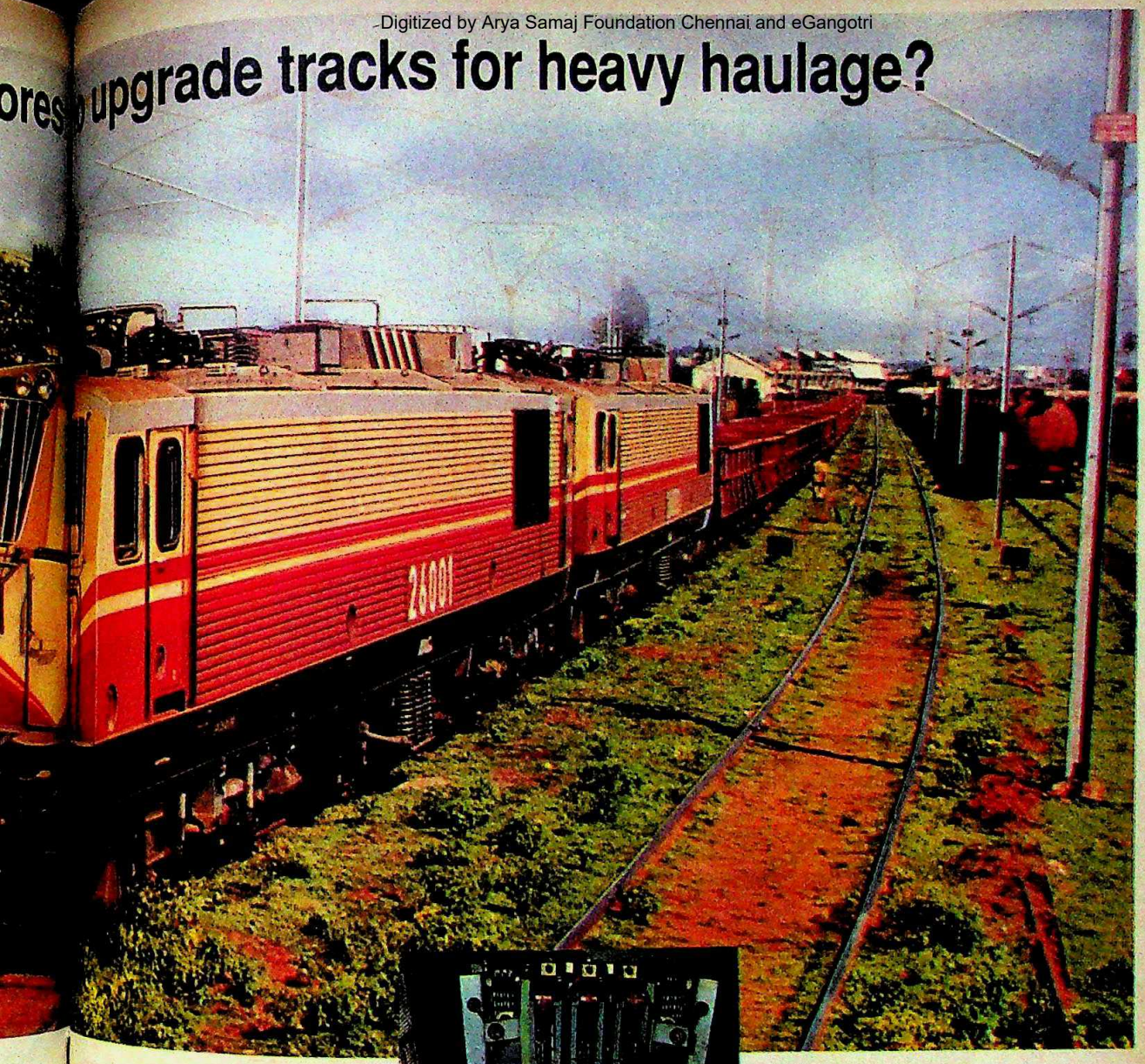
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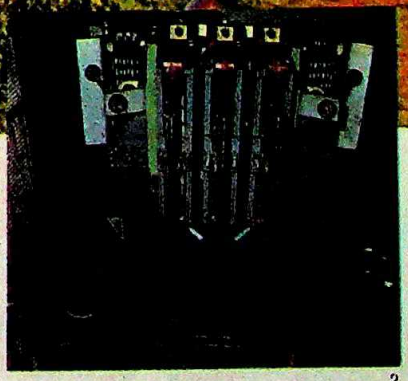
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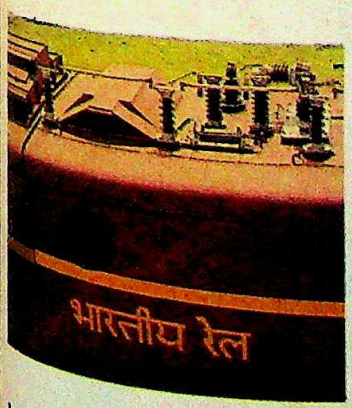
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upgrade tracks for heavy haulage?





2



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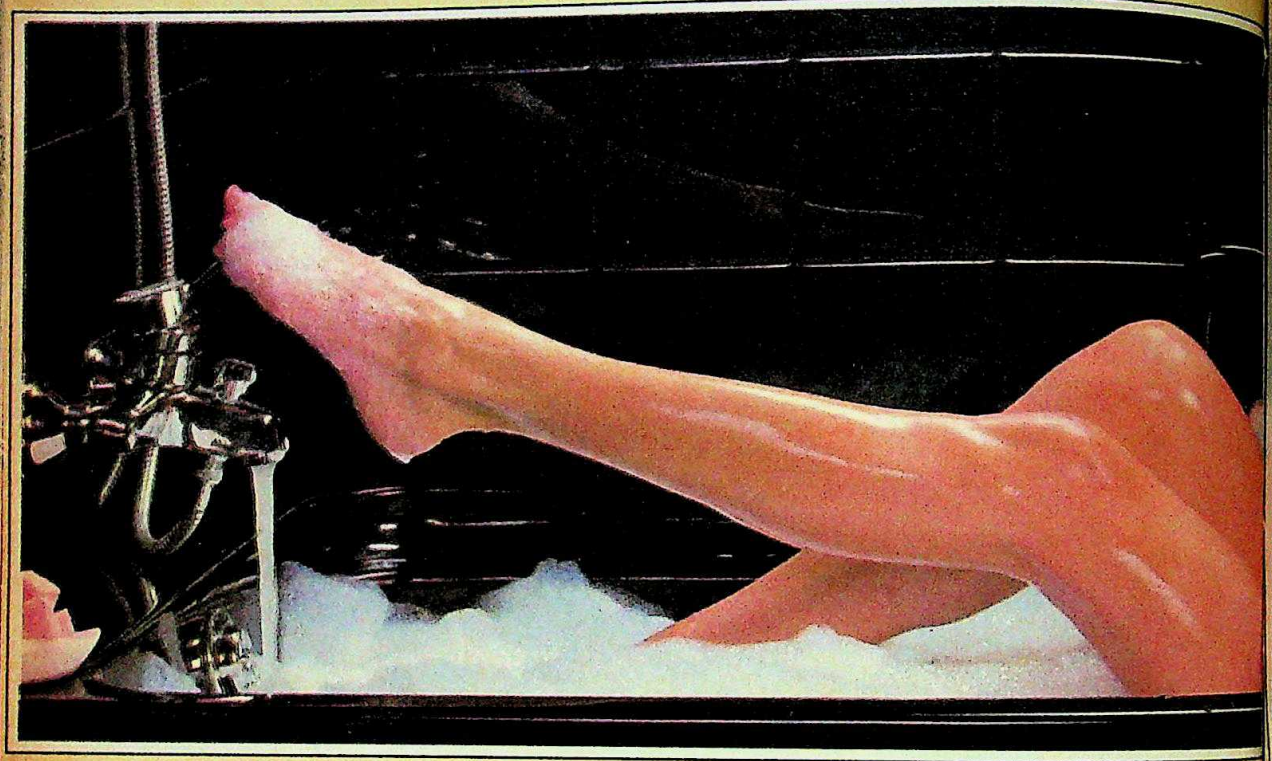
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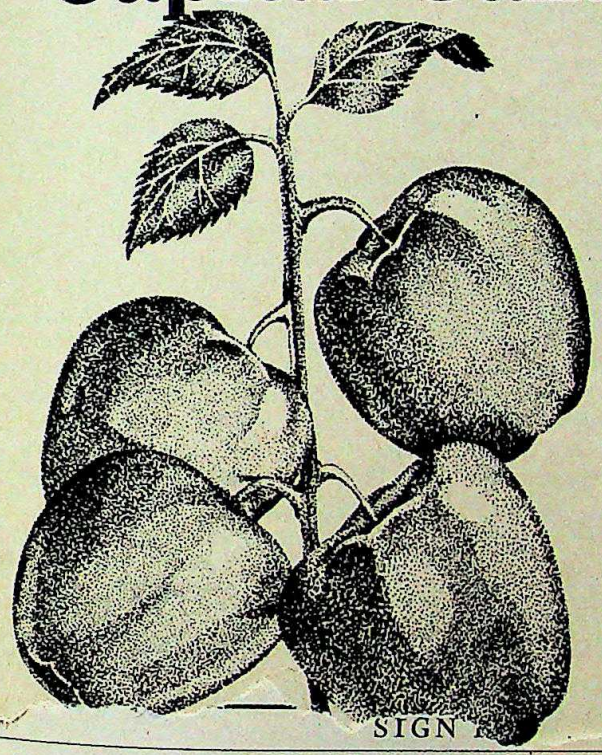


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RETIRED: Madan Lal, 38, mercurial all-rounder who captained Delhi with distinction in the 1980s, from international and first class cricket. In his two-decade-long career, he played in 39 Tests, captured 71 Test wickets and scored 1,047 runs. He also claimed 65 wickets in one day internationals.



MARRIED: Novelist and bureaucrat Upamanyu Chatterjee, 32, to a Paris-based student Anne Vaugier on November 18. The author of the much-talked about *English August: An Indian Story* met Anne in New Delhi where she was doing a project for the French Ministry of Education.

WITHDRAWN: By Chief Justice Ranganath Misra, the defamatory remarks against women he had made at a Brahma Kumaris meet. Angry women's groups had petitioned the President to initiate impeachment proceedings against the chief justice unless he apologised. Misra says he made the comments in his personal capacity.

SUED: *Cine Blitz* by Rekha for defamation. She has sought an unconditional apology and damages of Rs 1 crore for herself and Rs 50 lakh for her secretary Farzana Jaffri. Rekha, whose estranged husband committed suicide recently, has been granted an ad interim injunction.



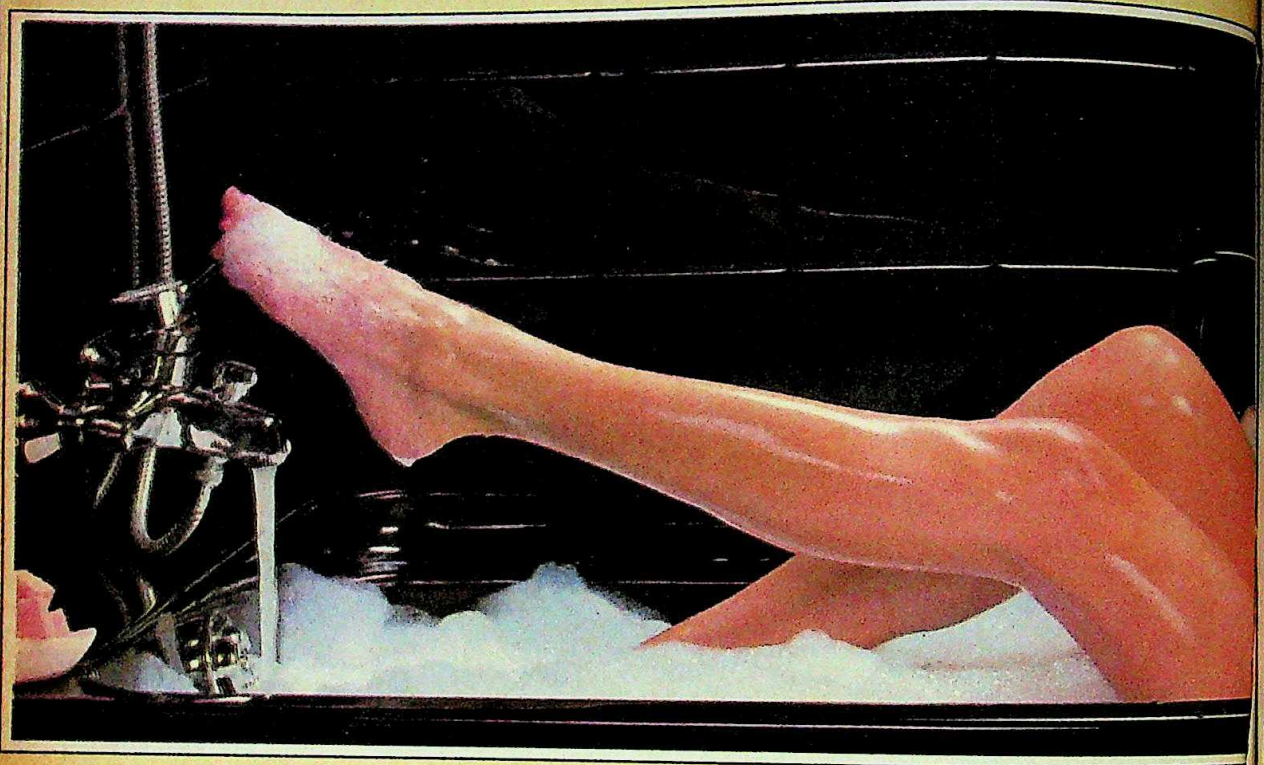
PERFORMED: [illegible] Ali Khan, sarod maestro, at Hong Kong, music that he composed for a philharmonic orchestra for the first time. M.F. Husain and four other artists added a different dimension to the event by capturing the show on canvas from the stage.



GROUNDED: All Air India air hostesses over the age of 45. Air India has announced that they will from now on be assigned clerical duties until they retire at the age of 58. The air hostesses have of course taken offence at what they think is a sexist move, and their unions are planning to take up the issue with the Government.

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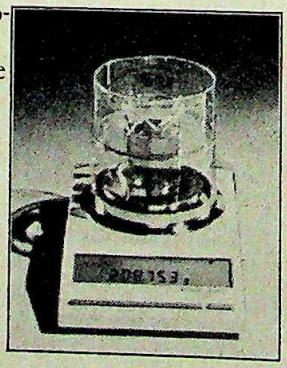
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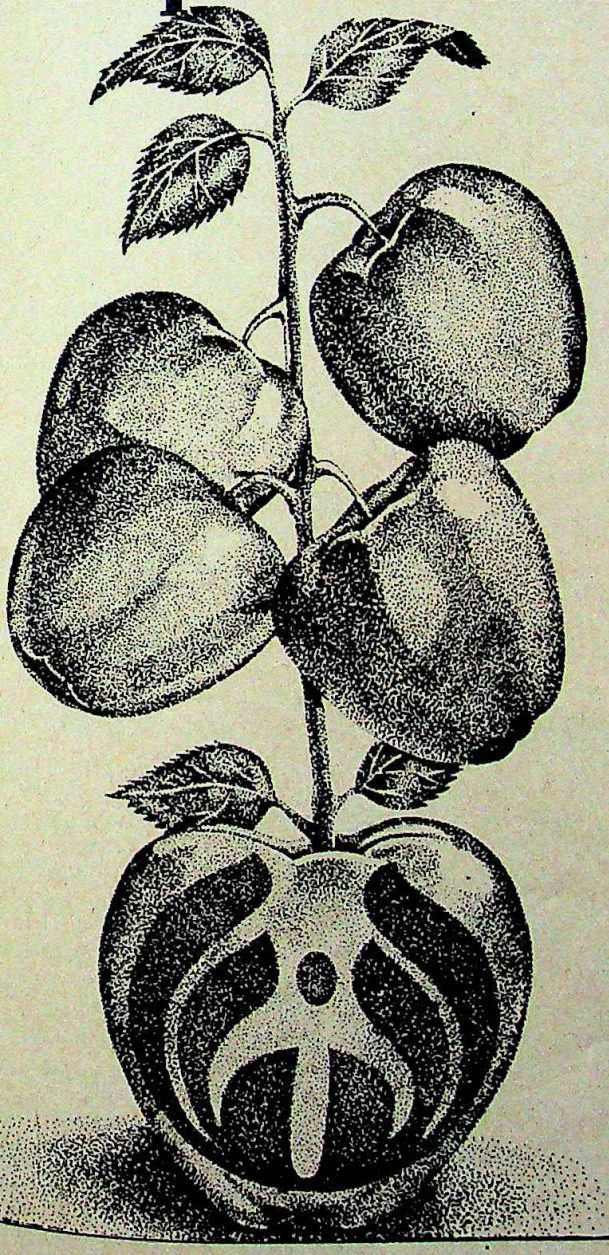
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SALMAN RUSHDIE

In the Twilight Zone

IT is now 21 months since celebrated author Salman Rushdie went into hiding in London following the fatwa issued by the late Ayatollah Khomeini sentencing him to death for his controversial novel, The Satanic Verses. Since then, Rushdie has lived like a fugitive, reportedly having moved 56 times in the first five months of hiding at the behest of his Special Branch security. The isolation and tension has begun to tell. Gerald Marzorati, a senior editor of Harper's magazine, who knows Rushdie, interviewed the tired, but hopeful author in a windowless room under elaborate security conditions. Excerpts:

SALMAN Rushdie is carrying more weight—that was my first thought, as I glimpsed him from the foyer through a partially opened door. It had gathered in his cheeks, beneath his chin, above his belt especially.

And as I was ushered in to see him, and as we stood together in the small, sparely furnished room waiting for his bodyguards to close the door behind us, I detected signs of the weight we do not measure but sense, the heartfelt burdens of deep loneliness and fear.

His skin had a grayish night-pallor. His thinning hair was unkempt, he needed a shave and his heavily lidded eyes, behind large glasses, seemed dulled and focused inward.

He looked like a man who had not known a decent night's sleep for longer than he cared to remember. He looked the kind for which sleep does little good.

He smiled and we embraced and he said, softly: "It has been so strange, hasn't it?"

It had.

I had first met Rushdie in the fall of 1988, when I visited him in London to write about his life and his novel, *The Satanic Verses*, a book whose recent publication in England was just then beginning to be angrily denounced by most of the leaders of Britain's two million Muslims.

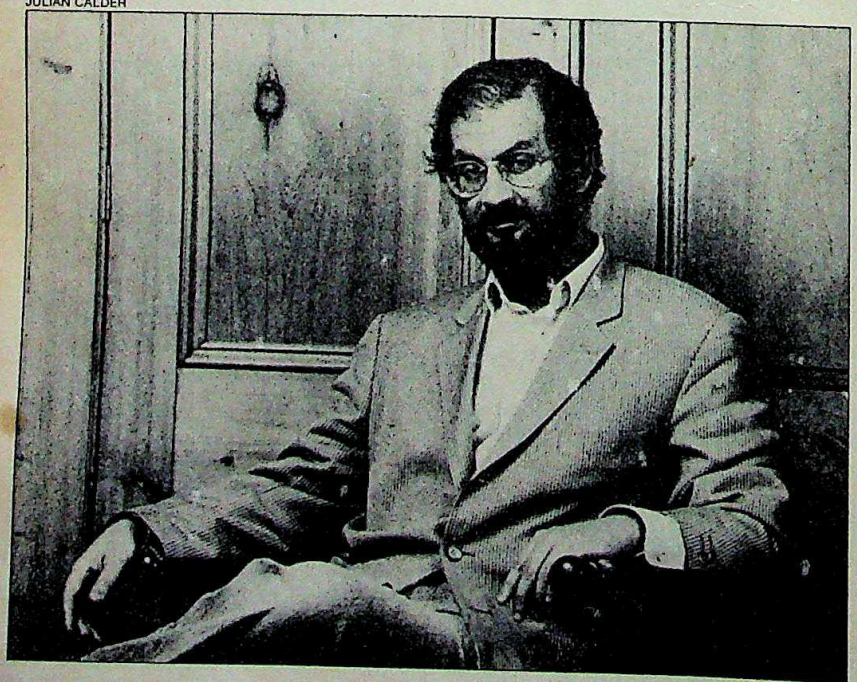
Over the next few months I continued to speak regularly with him by telephone—the last time being on Tuesday, January 31, 1989, when he nervously described for me a Hyde Park rally that had been held three days before, a rally at which more than 8,000 Muslims burned copies of *The Satanic Verses* and called for its withdrawal from Britain's bookshops.

On February 14, exactly two weeks after our conversation and just before the 2 p.m. news was to begin, in a broadcast on Radio Teheran, the station's announcer read an astonishing *fatwa*, or edict, from the Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini: Khomeini went on to urge all "zealous Muslims" to execute Rushdie quickly.

Rushdie, along with his wife of 13 months, the novelist Marianne Wiggins, went into hiding the following day, under the round-the-clock protection of Scotland Yard's Special Branch. In hiding he remains.

One evening last month I joined him there. On the

JULIAN CALDER



> *My situation remains. And I do not feel habituated to it at all. It requires an enormous amount of energy each day to keep yourself going. I wonder sometimes what a person who was not a writer would do in such a situation.*

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ASADOUR GUZELIAN



Protestors burning *The Satanic Verses* at Bradford last year

morning of the day we were to meet he phoned me at my London hotel. "I'm afraid this is going to be a little cloak-and-daggerish," he said, referring to the arrangements Special Branch had made to bring us together.

I was told I would not be going to the safe house where Rushdie was actually living. I was told I would have only two hours with him. I was told I could describe neither the place of our meeting nor the men and methods employed to keep Rushdie safe and hidden.

I was driven around long enough to assure all concerned that a New Yorker could say no more about where he had been than that he had been taken somewhere in the dark, far from central London.

The windowless room where we met did not seem lived in, but arranged. Light fell from a single overhead fixture, the white walls were empty, the hardwood floor bare. Rushdie and I sat down opposite each other in stuffed chairs.

He had on a blue-and-white-striped thick cotton shirt, black jeans, the vest from a pin-striped suit, red socks, English tan wing-tips. I glanced at my watch: it was 8 p.m.

We tried to make small talk about new books, mutual friends; but we could not. He poured some red wine for me and then for himself from a nearly spent bottle on a small coffee-table between us.

I then asked him if, after what was approaching two years, the ordeal continued to strike him as strange, as he had said when I'd first arrived. Had he, in any way, gotten used to his situation?

> *"I've heard people say I should have remained in public, that if I got killed—well, people get killed all the time for what they believe in. My response is that people should not go about advising others to get killed.*

"My situation remains. And I do not feel habituated to it. At all. In this year and a half there has been no shape. There have been times that have been relatively stable and there have been times, well..."

He took off his glasses, placed them on the table, leaned back and rubbed his eyes.

Then he said: "It requires an enormous amount of energy each day to keep yourself going. I wonder sometimes what a person who wasn't a writer would do in such a situation. For most people, I suspect solitude is unusual or perhaps even something to be avoided. It's different for writers, of course.

"Even when I was leading a normal writer's life—normal by western standards, that is; after all, writers all over the world are in danger and oppressed—even then I was alone most of each day.

"Now, as then, I spend much of each day writing and reading. Now, as then, when I consider the best of days is when the work is going well, when I am writing until I can work no more and then wake up the next day and pick up right where I left off.

"Still, some days there simply is not the energy. One feels how the solitude is not of one's own making. But I have survived."

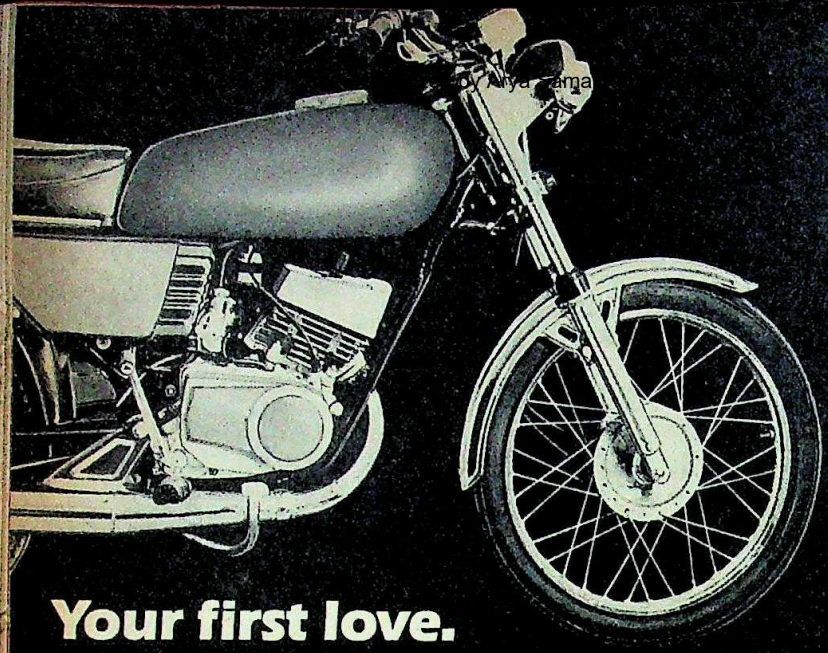
He reached into his shirt pocket and pulled out a package of cigarettes. "I just started smoking again," he said. He lit a cigarette and dragged on it deeply. "For seven years I quit. I've simply decided I'm going to let myself smoke." He laughed a little. "I have reason for it."

I asked him if he had a daily routine.

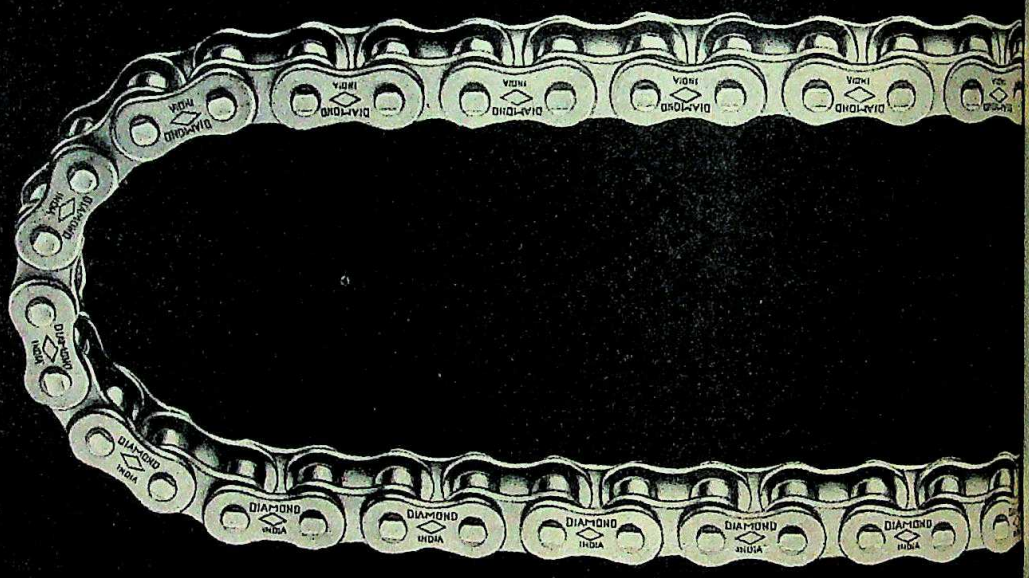
"No," he said. "There is no such thing. No rhythm." He

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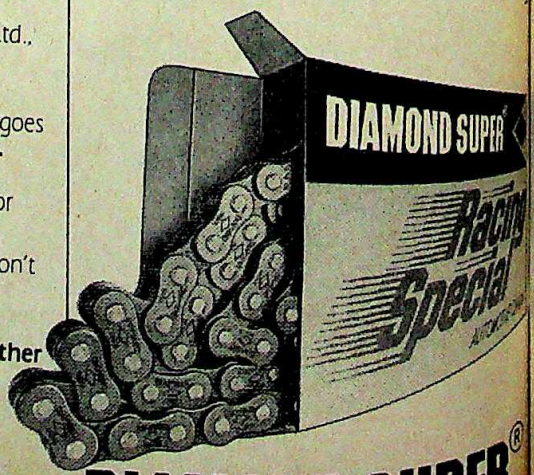
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> *There are certain advantages to being alone when you are in this situation. It is easier if you have to be responsible only for your own well-being. I'll tell you about my marriage in one sentence: my marriage is over.*

Rushdie's estranged wife Marianne Wiggins under escort in London last year

told me he can neither drive (a passion of his), nor go to the movies (another), nor walk in a park, nor shop for dinner.

"Because everything must be gotten for me—and I don't want to get into the details of this, for obvious reasons—you have to know beforehand exactly what it is you want for dinner three nights from now, which you cannot know."

Mostly when Rushdie has ventured out of doors during the last 21 months it has been to move on to another safe house. He is said to have been moved 56 times in the first five months alone.

When I asked him for his own current tally he said it was not something he could talk about. "What I can tell you is that England is a small place and like all small places it is a nosy place. Eventually, no matter how well set up a place is, there is a problem. You learn to develop antennae—to sense when those living around you are getting too curious."

He has reread a number of his favourite novels. He reads the papers and the mail that can be gotten to him and watches too much television. And he talks a great deal on the phone. "I've become something of a telephone addict," he said. "And I would say the most difficult times for me have been when I have not had easy access to a phone. At those times the sense of isolation..." His voice trailed off, as it would from time to time.

It is known that Rushdie does receive guests on a fairly regular basis, most of the visitors being his writer friends or those involved in publishing his books. He has even attended several dinner parties, but he won't discuss these rare ventures out from what he tends to refer to as his "hole" or his "hell".

I asked him if he has ever regretted going into hiding, if he ever thinks he should have taken precautions, but remained, so to speak, above ground.

"Yes, I have heard that said," he began. "I have heard people say I should have remained in public, that if I got killed—well, people get killed all the time for what they believe in. My response is that people should not go about advising others to get killed.

"I think there is no doubt that if I had not lived as I have this past year and a half...well, let me say this: early on, in the first months, say, I was not particularly optimistic about my chances of staying alive. That's a strange thing for anyone to have to go through."

I brought up a report that in London near Paddington Station on August 3, 1989, an explosion wrecked two floors of a hotel. A young man, thought to be handling a bomb in one of the rooms, died in the blast.

A Lebanese group calling itself the Organisation of the Mujahadeen of Islam claimed responsibility for the explosion and described the dead man as the group's "first martyr" in an operation designed to kill Rushdie.

THEN, hesitantly, I asked Rushdie about his marriage. In July 1989, Wiggins emerged from hiding—to be her husband's eyes and ears, she told reporters at the time—and both she and Rushdie have since said that with her now having left, she cannot, for security reasons, return, even to visit him.

"You know, there are certain advantages to being alone when you are in this situation," he said when I asked him about this arrangement. "If you are the target it is easier if you have to be responsible only for your own well-being, for keeping only yourself in reasonable spirits and so on."

Some friends of Rushdie's have spoken of the marriage as one in trouble even before the announcement of the *fatwa*. (There has also been talk about a young Indo-American woman he arranges to see.)

Wiggins, in the US last spring to promote a paperback edition of her most recent novel *John Dollar*, had said the marriage was intact.

Rushdie—according to friends—was said to be embarrassed by her assertion. Was this so?

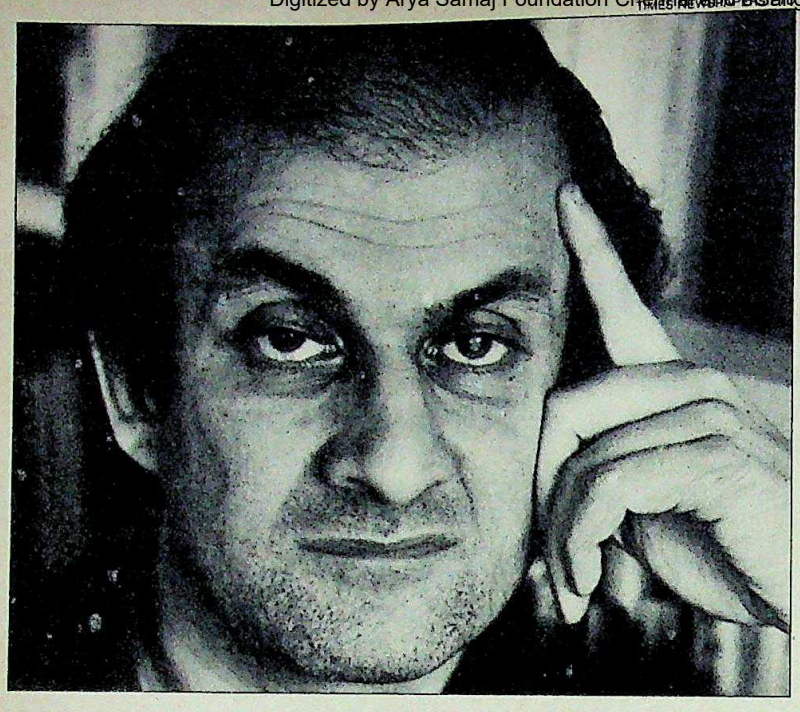
"I will tell you about my marriage in one sentence," he said, and drew another cigarette from his pack. "My marriage is over."

We had run out of wine and Rushdie left the room for a moment to get another bottle.

When he returned, our conversation turned to his new

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I am 43, I have suffered and I would like to resume a more normal life. What gives me hope is that even the angriest person does not stay angry forever. People move on. I would like to move on. I want to find an end to this story. It is the one story I must find an end to.

book *Haroun and the Sea of Stories*. It has just been published in England, where it has attracted warm reviews, and will begin reaching bookstores in the US.

(That Rushdie agreed to meet in hiding with an American journalist just a few weeks before his book was due to arrive in US bookstores is, of course, not merely a matter of chance.)

Haroun is a fantastical (and fantastically hopeful) novel and a very funny one too, bookishly clever. Its brave young hero Haroun bounces along on Rushdie's borrowings, imaginings and polyglot prose, traversing magical seascapes and moonscapes to clean up the polluted Sea of Stories from which his father, the storyteller Rashid, has long drunk, but, alas, can drink no more.

ONE can hardly read the story as other than an allegory of Rushdie's own predicament, but, in fact, the book had assumed at least its rough shape long before Khomeini called for a deadly silencing of its author.

I tried to draw Rushdie into a discussion of *The Satanic Verses*, but this was a book he did not seem eager to talk about, not in any depth.

Last February, to mark the first anniversary of the *fatwa*, Rushdie released a 7,000-word, closely argued defence of the novel entitled *In Good Faith*, published in the US by *Newsweek*. In the essay he set out to answer his accusers point by point.

But Rushdie's essay had little impact in Iran, where Hashemi Rafsanjani, now the country's president, could be heard explaining that *The Satanic Verses* was "an organised and planned effort" involving the intelligence services of Britain, France, Germany, the US—and certain "Zionist publishers".

There, news of the essay's publication was greeted by an enthusiastic renewal of the *fatwa*.

When I brought up, or attempted to, this reaction to his defence of his novel, Rushdie grimaced and his eyes seemed to harden.

"Look," he said, "this is a dispute, at this point, between people who care about novels and people who don't. I could sit here and talk about how I think my novel has quite a lot to say about faith, how it has a very large spiritual dimension, how one can find in the book many more sympathetic Muslim characters than not, but who do I say this to?"

He continued in a quieter voice: "I have learned that offence can be taken when it was in no way intended. I did not sit down and set out to insult Muslim believers—though it is quite clear I did cause offence and I understand how people of sincere religious belief were made sincerely upset by a work that, in some of its aspects, challenged their belief.

"The problem now is that my intention remains the central issue. No one talks about the book anymore. They talk about how he meant to do it. How he did it on purpose. I am not talking only of the conspiracy theories of the ultra-extremists. I am talking about those who describe me as deracinated, as someone trying to unmake the world from which he came, as a self-hater.

"That people are able to say this...in some ways this is more difficult than the fight about the contents of *The Satanic Verses*."

It may be a year or more, Rushdie says, before he actually sits down and begins writing a new novel. He holds out the hope that by then he will no longer be hiding from those possessed by a feeling to kill him.

I asked if he feared his death sentence would become, in effect, a life sentence: that this was the way things always would be.

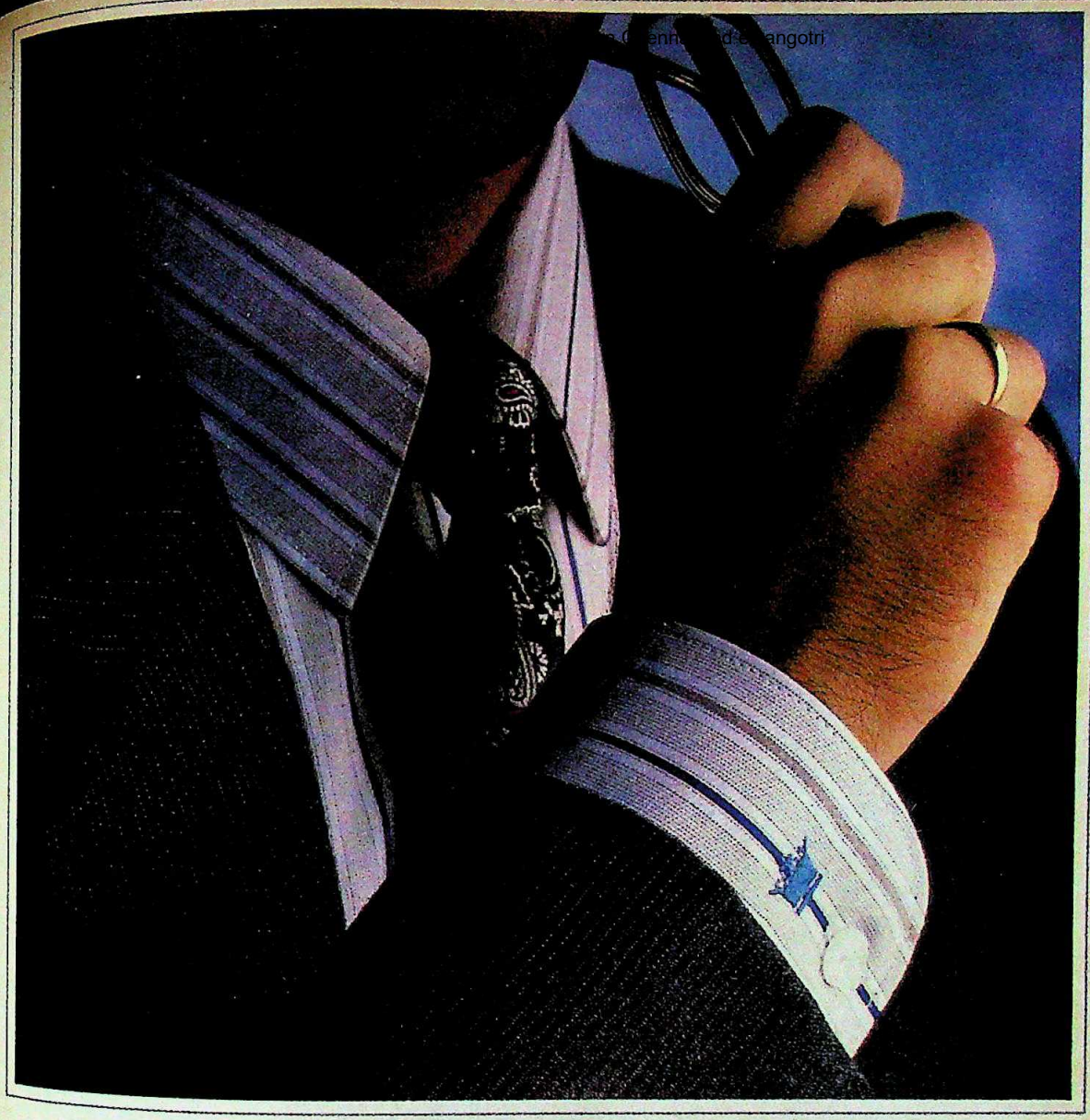
"No," he said. "No, I don't—I cannot—think that's true.

"I am 43, I have suffered and I would like to resume a more normal life," he continued. "What gives me hope is that even the angriest person does not stay angry forever. People move on. I would like to move on. I want to find an end to this story. It is the one story I must find an end to."

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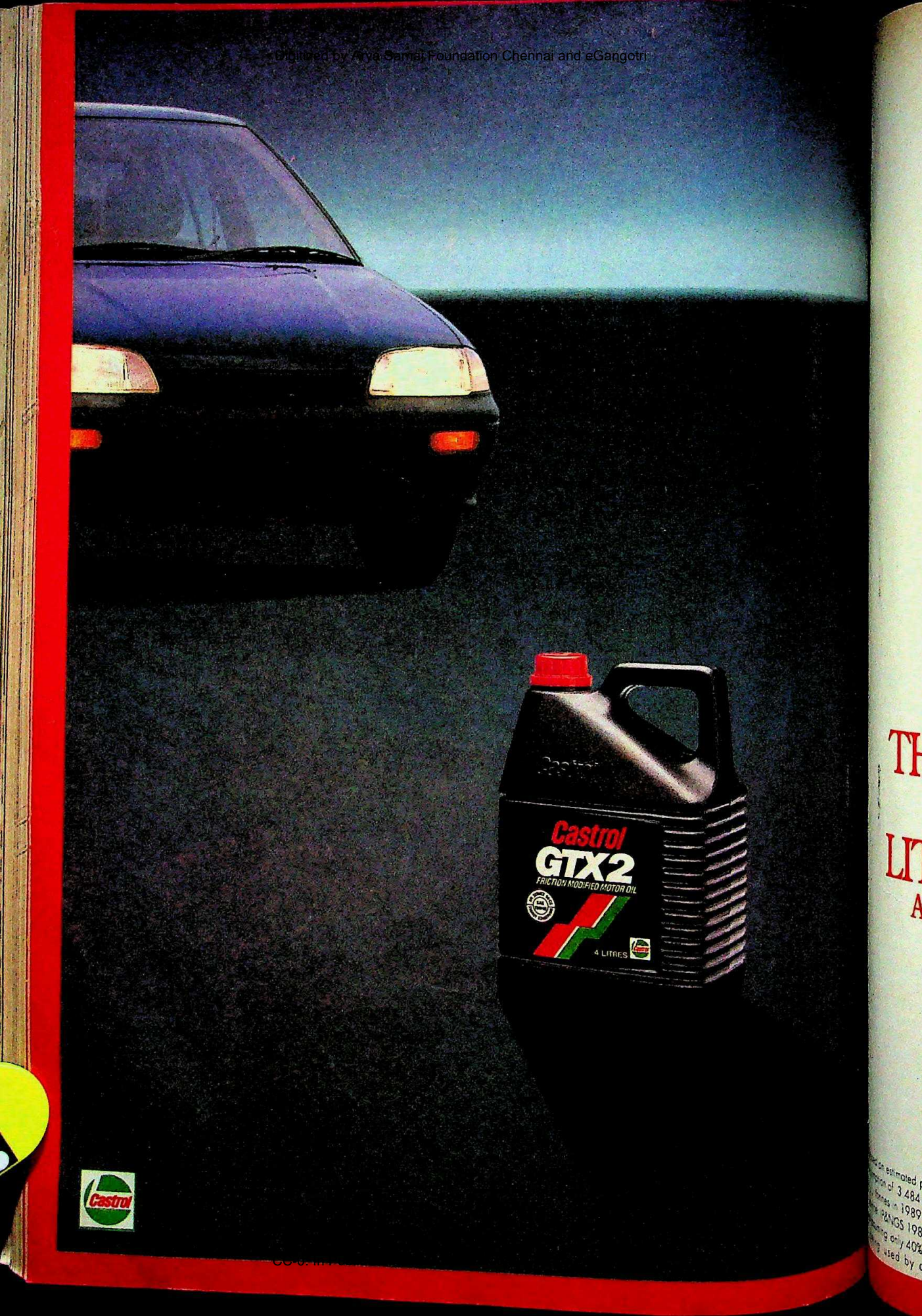
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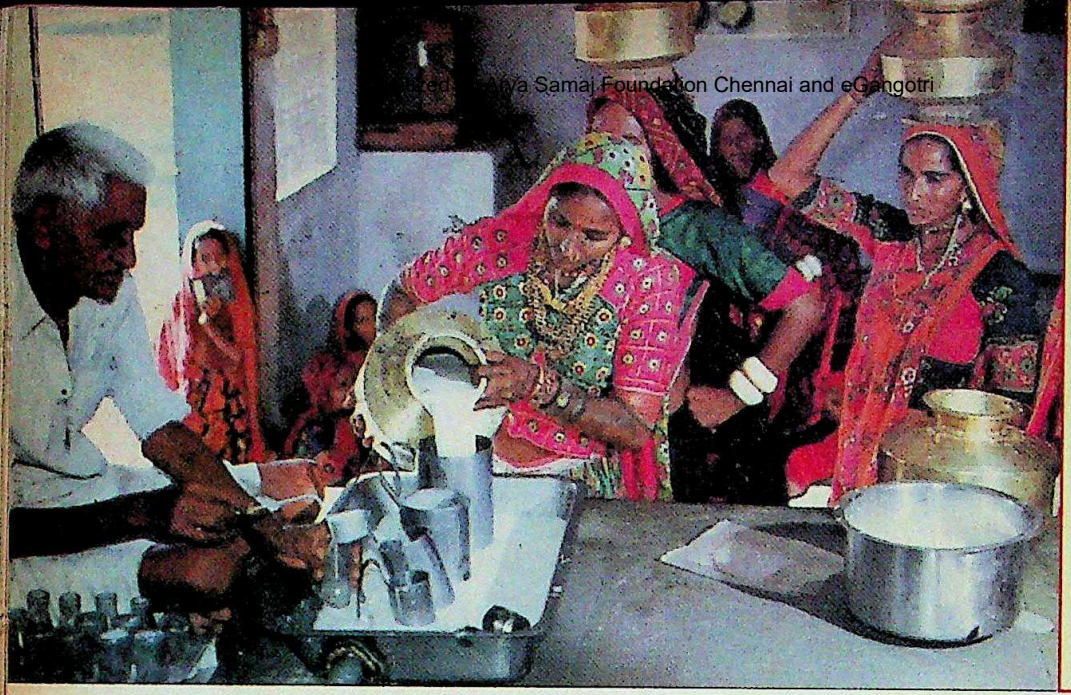
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Big profits have lured 65 lakh farmers to dairying.

BUSINESS FEATURE

NATIONAL DAIRY DEVELOPMENT BOARD

A Flood of Success

In the 20 years since its launch, Operation Flood has made India, which once used to import milk, the world's third largest producer of milk and an exporter.

By AMARNATH K. MENON in Anand

THIS is one flood that instead of leaving a trail of death and destruction, has spread well-being and prosperity all around. Evocatively christened Operation Flood, it is finally coming true to its name. India now has a surplus of milk and is gearing up to export milk powder. No mean achievement this, for a country that was written off as a hopeless case depending as it did on imports and gifts of milk powder and other dairy products.

Operation Flood has been spearheaded by the National Dairy Development Board (NDDB) which is drawing up plans to export milk powder to Nepal and the European Economic Community (EEC). Indications of a turnaround were discernible earlier this year when India and the NDDB declined the aid of skimmed milk powder and butter oil from the EEC and instead asked for Rs 36 crore in cash to bolster up the dairy development programme. Around the same time, there was a milk glut in some parts of Rajasthan, considered arid, forcing the Uttar Rajasthan Milk Union to take the unprecedented step of refusing milk from the producers for two and a half days. Similarly, cooperatives in the Kheda district of Gujarat were forced to declare 'milk holidays' for the first time.

In exactly 20 years, Operation Flood has made the country the third biggest milk producer in the world. From a paltry 20.74 million tonnes in 1970, the total milk production is expected to cross the 50-million tonne mark soon. So alluring has become the lowly *doodhwala's* trade that the number of dairy farmers has shot up from 12 lakh in 1979 to 65 lakh today. In the same time-span the number of milk cooperative societies has grown from 10,000 to 60,000. The dairy farmers that come under the Flood umbrella, make the market flush with eight million litres of milk every day after retaining a small portion for their own consumption. It fetches them Rs 30 million a day adding up to an awesome figure of Rs 10,000 million a year.

"Dairying has come of age in India," says Verghese Kurien, the proud father of the white revolution and founder chairman of the NDDB, headquartered in Anand, Gujarat. "All this was made possible by the clever management of funds and preventing governmental and other external interference," he adds. Truly, the middlemen have been exterminated as they were creaming off most of the profits by forcing unremunerative prices on dairy farmers.

Operation Flood tried to replicate on a national level the by now much-chronicled experiment (it even inspired a film, *Manthan*) in cooperative enterprise centred in Anand town of Kheda district of Gujarat. The Kheda District Milk Producers' Union, known as Amul by the brand name of its products, formed towards the end of the '40s, started to produce, collect and supply milk to Bombay to meet the growing demand in the teeming metropolis. Apart from skyrocketing throughput,

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NDDB is gearing up to export milk powder to Nepal and the EEC.



the cooperative brought home better prices for the producers, generated direct employment for thousands and in the process served as an instrument of social and economic change.

The Anand model is a three-tier structure: the societies at the village level which collect the milk from the producers and pay them; the district-level producers union, which provides the inputs required by the farmers including artificial insemination, veterinary services and supply of feeds; and a federation of the unions at the state level which manages the dairy and markets milk and milk products.

Taking the cue from Anand, Operation Flood in its first phase linked India's 18 best milksheds with the four metros. In phase two the grid was extended to 136 milksheds and 290 urban markets. The seed capital for the operations raised from the World Food Programme, EEC milk products and a soft loan from the World Bank, had created by 1985 a self-sustaining system of 43,000 village cooperatives. Milk-drying plants were set up and the combination adopted to shed off the excess in winter months and drying up in summers. As the cooperatives prospered they were able to hire professional managers. And since income from dairying usually doubles when a milk cooperative is introduced in a particular area, milk prices in the neighbouring villages also improve by virtue of the tuning-fork effect.

BY the sheer scale and resources available to it, Operation Flood has been able to raise a colossal edifice on the Anand foundation. The daily average for 1990 of marketed milk in the metros is 4.19 million litres and in smaller towns 3.05 million litres. The NDDB's scientists have been evolving better feed techniques and high-yield crossbreeds. They have popularised the bypass protein feed that takes the feed directly to the second chamber of the digestive system, and the wonder feed urea molasses block (UMB), an inexpensive source of non-protein nitrogen, ready energy and minerals, a daily 400 gm lick of which can substitute all the feed given to a cow that produces three litres of milk a day.



"Dairying has at last come of age in India."
VERGHESE KURIEN
Chairman, NDDB

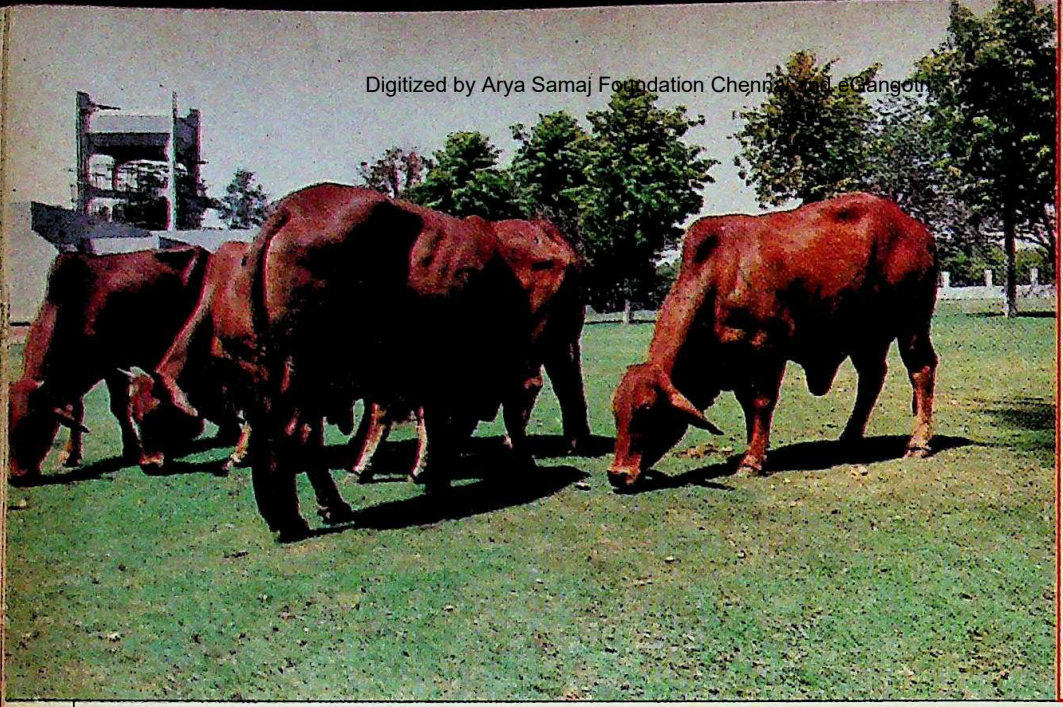
Improving the milchstock and its productivity became necessary since the demand for milk was increasing rapidly but cattle population remained more or less static. Now there are 30,000 artificial insemination centres that have carried out 15 million inseminations, 60 sperm stations that supply frozen and chilled semen, and 200 farms that provide bulls.

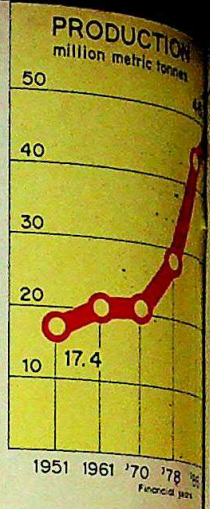
The NDDB has also been striving to replace the indigenous herd with those breeds that convert feed into milk more efficiently. Using biotechnology, embryo transfer techniques have been tried successfully on cows and buffaloes at NDDB's Sabarmati Ashram *gaushala* at Bidaj in Kheda district. "There will be a qualitative change in the breed of buffaloes in the whole country by the end of this decade," says a confident M.P.G. Kurup, NDDB's biotechnology research general manager. Half of the country's milk production comes from the 35 million buffaloes. This can be doubled if the genetic pool is improved. For while 46 per cent of buffaloes in the world are in India the milk yield is only seven per cent of the world's produce.

As of now, despite the chest-beating claims by the NDDB, the overall milk scene in the country can at best be described as a glass half-filled. Critics

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NDDB has evolved high-yield breeds to increase production.

like Claude Alvares, who dubbed the white revolution as a white lie in a controversial cover story six years ago in *The Illustrated Weekly*, prefer to see it as half empty. The anomaly arises because the critics limit themselves to the social and nutritional aspects, not bothering to laud the economic and technical success of the Operation. It is true that 90 per cent of the milk produced each year still comes from 12 of the 25 states like Uttar Pradesh, Punjab, Haryana, Rajasthan, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu and of course, Gujarat. Even in these states, the bulk is confined to a few pockets. The criticism that the milk revolution has only benefited the affluent section also holds water. The day of the milk coupons is over; but the still rates have taken milk out of both the rural and the urban poor's, even otherwise, extremely nutrition-deficient diet.

That the Operation is not merely for "the development of the cow but the

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"Sales can be increased by extending milk grids and marketing milk powder in the northeast."

AMRITA PATEL
Managing Director (Operations) NDDB

development of man," as stated by the much-laurelled Kurien, has only met with partial success. The spirit of the ritial Anand cooperative, which was rooted in the independence movement, ould not be transported everywhere.

FARMERS flourished if the cooperatives were strong and had developed on the right lines. For example, the 6,000-odd residents of Pamol in the Mehsana district of Gujarat earn Rs 75 lakh a year from milk alone and the milk producers in the Periyar district of Tamil Nadu earn more than Rs 12 crore a year. Assets, fixed deposits and surplus funds of societies are used to improve roads and start schools in the area covered by the cooperative. But, "at some places we failed to make the farmer aware of his rights as a member of the cooperative because archaic laws framed originally for cooperative credit societies were extended to the milk cooperatives," says Amrita Patel, NDDB's managing director (operations). Far from eliminating the exploitative elements, some cooperatives helped them to emerge as a political power centre.

Another criticism is that the NDDB is not open to government scrutiny. However the Kurien apologists argue that it would affect the autonomy. Besides, several government-run programmes for farmers have not been particularly successful so far.

On the positive side, the Operation has opened new employment and income avenues in the vulnerable sections in rural areas, thus slowing down the mass migration to the cities. It has also spawned a flourishing dairy machinery industry which is exporting equipment.

But it goes without saying that new and more profitable markets have to be found within the country. Kurien asserts that there is scope for expanding liquid milk sale in the towns and cities with over one lakh population. Amrita Patel concurs. Says she: "This can be done through extensive milk grid linkages and it is essential that more milk tankers are attached to trains and that milk powder is sold in the eastern and north-eastern states."

Clearly, the NDDB has an even brighter future and, taking everything into consideration, Operation Flood's successes far outweigh the failures.

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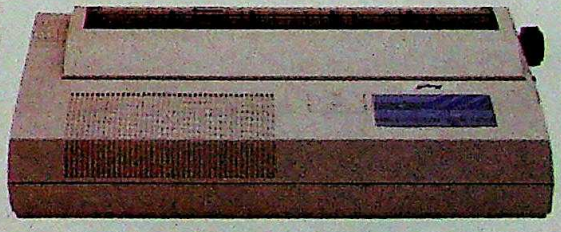
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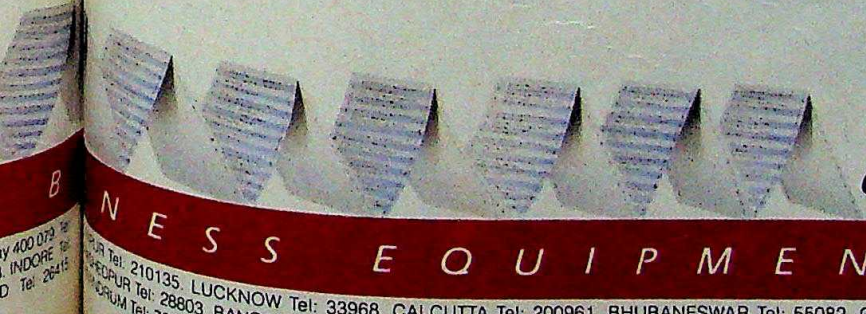
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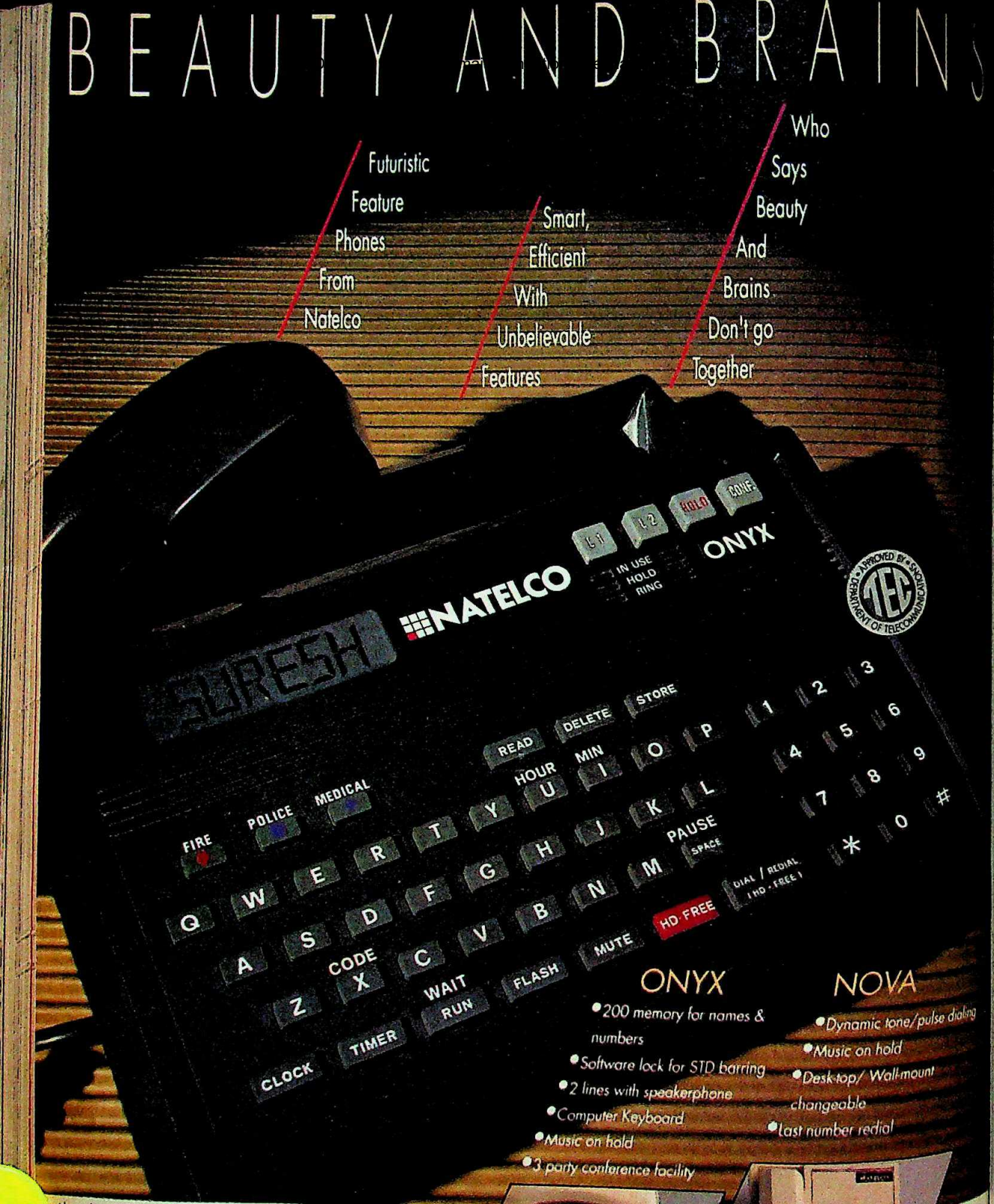
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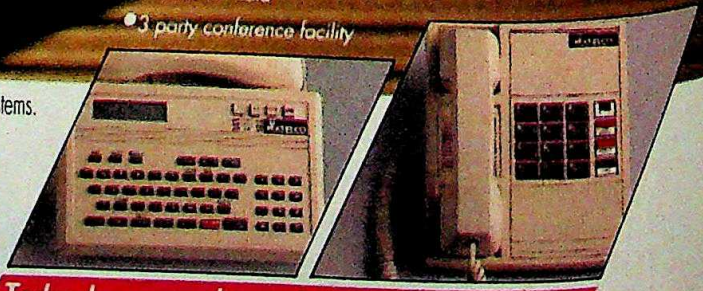
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GOLDEN COLLABORATION

THE country's gold production has been steadily declining because of the diminishing reserves of the Kolar Gold Fields in Karnataka. In an effort to boost production the Government is seriously considering a proposal to tie up with foreign companies to jointly explore for new deposits on a product-sharing basis. A host of Australian companies like Broken Hill, Aerodata and Amdel have already shown interest in coming to India. In fact, the Department of Mining had given a proposal to the Rajiv Gandhi government last year for a relaxation in the policy which forbade foreign companies from getting into mining. However, with the change in government the proposal was put under cold storage. Now that there is a new government, the department is planning to revive the old proposal.

IMPRESSIVE GROWTH

IN the Indian moulded-luggage business the two names of VIP and Aristocrat are not always associated with the same owner: Dilip Piramal. While the companies are run as separate units, their total turnover in terms of luggage tots up to an impressive five million pieces a year, still quite a way behind world leaders like US-based Samsonite which produces about 12 million pieces of luggage a year. But the Indian industry has made impressive gains in the past few years. The organised moulded luggage industry in India was in the dumps only a few years ago with hardly any growth and faced intense competition from the small-scale sector and harsh excise levies. But that seems to be a thing of the past, with the industry growing at a healthy 15 to 20 per cent. For the two leaders—VIP and Aristocrat—it also means a healthier bottomline, with profitability up: about Rs 15 crore on a combined turnover of Rs 220 crore.

DIVERSIFICATION SPREE

A few months ago, the little-known Rs 50-crore Flex Industries Ltd—specialising in packaging—came into the limelight with the takeover of the match making giants Wimco. Spurred by success, Flex plans to diversify on a large scale. The company has floated an entirely export oriented unit to export frozen vegetables to Europe and the US. It has tied up with a Danish company for technical expertise for this project. It also plans to set up a speciality chemicals unit in Madhya Pradesh.

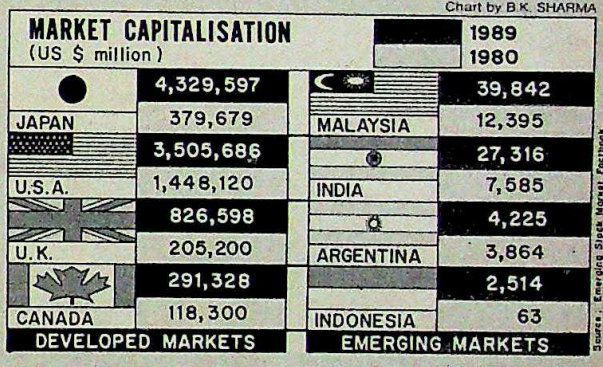
THINKING AFRESH

EARLIER this year, Air India did a rethink on its loss-making hotel chain—Hotel Corporation of India (HCI). There were plans of selling HCI to retrieve a year that otherwise may have ended in a whopping loss, thanks to the Gulf crisis. But they may not have to do that now. Reason: Air India for its part appears to be clipping along comfortably. With the April-September 1990 operating profits pegged at Rs 75 crore, and the net profit at Rs 57 crore—counting the Rs 185 crore they have to get from the Government for the Kuwait air-lift—the year may not end as badly as anticipated. This is despite the increased fuel bill and higher insurance premiums. With the hectic season commencing, the next six months should augur well for the airline. The hotel chain for its part seems to have evolved a new strategy for survival: travellers on both Air India and Indian Airlines who book themselves at HCI hotels will have special handling for their baggage.

CAPITAL TIMES

MARKET capitalisation is the total market value of all the quoted scrips on a particular stock exchange. The current market capitalisation of the Indian capital markets is in the vicinity of about Rs 90,000 crore, with nearly 90 per cent coming from the Bombay Stock Exchange alone. Amongst the emerging or developing

Chart by B.K. SHARMA



markets in the world, India's capital markets growth in the last 10 years has been quite creditable with market capitalisation having quadrupled. But the real action is in the capital markets of the developed economies: Japan has grown 11 times, and the UK just over four times. As the process of disintermediation in the Indian financial sector continues, and more money is raised from the capital markets directly, rather than through intermediaries, India might soon figure in the list of the majors.

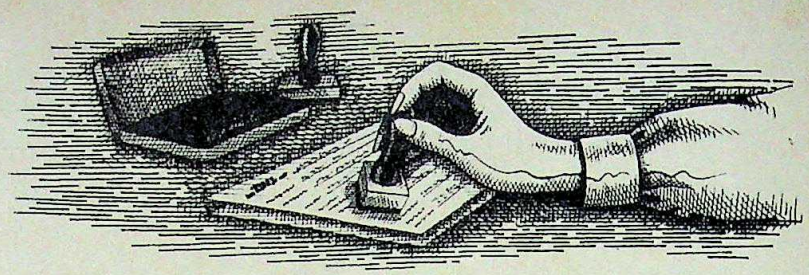
MOVING PLANS

TILL recently Bombay's Santa Cruz Electronic Export Promotion Zone (SEEPZ) and Bangalore's Software Park accounted for a lion's share of India's software export overseas. But that may change, with the development of an electronics park at Pune. It is understood that many companies involved in software exports are considering moving to the queen of the Deccan. With good reason: Pune is closer to Bombay than Bangalore is and doesn't yet have the problems of over-congestion, a high cost of living and unaffordable housing.

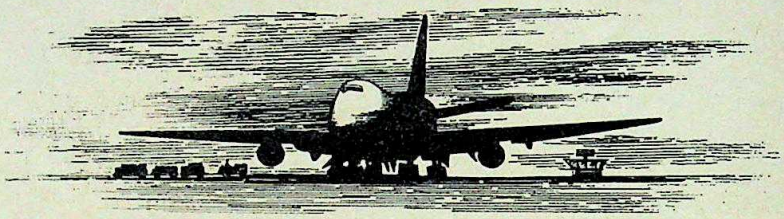
Companies like Mahindra British Telecom, who have a setup at SEEPZ, have already decided to establish themselves in Pune. But if Pune has some advantages—such as access to cheaper international telecommunication lines—it is not without competition. Apparently, Bangalore will soon have a second technology park, one which has already been inaugurated.

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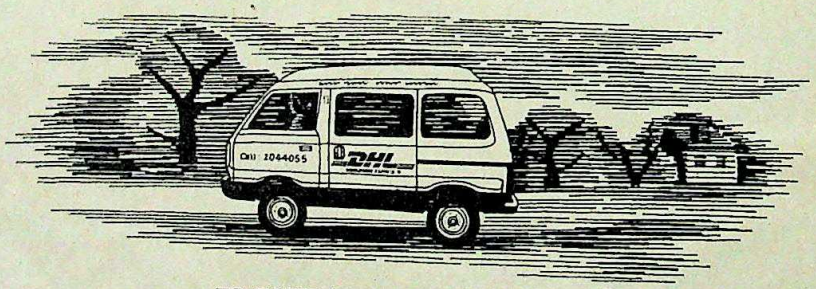
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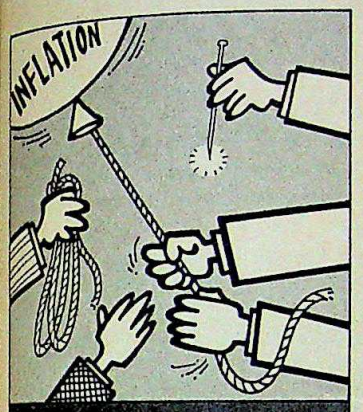
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ECONOMIC POLICY

Difficult Options

The new government has little room for manoeuvre



POLICY OPTIONS FOR THE NEW GOVERNMENT

THE economic policy options available to Chandra Shekhar's Government will be constrained by two factors: its near-total dependence on the Congress(I) and the spectre of approaching elections.

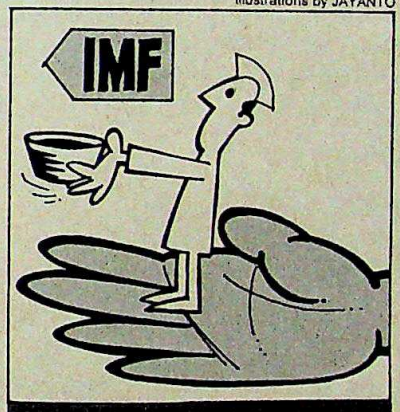
Congress(I) President Rajiv Gandhi has said that his party will support the new government only on the condition that the new prime minister expresses total allegiance to the Congress(I)'s policies. Says Congress(I) MP Vishwajit Singh: "We will not interfere with the functioning of this government so long as it remembers our sole criterion for support—a return to Congress policies that existed under Rajiv Gandhi." Such an exercise of power without responsibility will permit the Congress(I) to face the forthcoming elections unhampered by any of this government's actions. But the Government itself will be hamstrung by a lack of any room for manoeuvre.

And with the near-certainty of an approaching election the Shekhar Government will refuse to administer any of the harsh medicine urgently needed to revive the economy *(see box)*. However, the appointment of Yashwant Sinha, a pragmatic, centrist bureaucrat-turned-politician, as finance minister and the retention of most of the earlier government's economic and finance advisors, some of whom had also functioned under the Rajiv Gandhi regime, may well contain excesses of populism.

Given the economic scenario—rising inflation (slated to reach 12 per cent by the year-end), a widening budget deficit (probably over Rs 13,000 crore) and depleting foreign exchange reserves (Rs 3,045 crore on November 16 roughly equal to less than one month's imports)—it becomes essential for any government to drastically overhaul current policies. A conservative estimate of the impact of the oil crisis is around Rs 7,000 crore per year with the oil price being $28 a barrel. The net inflow from abroad may decline from the usual Rs 2,000 crore a year. Global recession will also affect export growth.

Within this context, there are several policy options before the Government.

Illustrations by JAYANTO



NEGOTIATE AN IMF LOAN

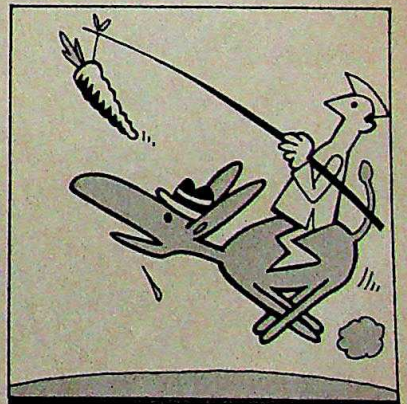
REGARDLESS of public postures *(see box)* there is general agreement within this government that given the depleting reserves, approaching the IMF is inescapable. The Congress(I) asserts that it will also support such negotiations.

But the question is—will the IMF lend to a government as unstable as the current one? Yes, say Congress(I) and government sources. Their argument: this government is more stable than the last one, it is dependent only on Congress(I) support while V.P. Singh's government had to contend with the BJP and the Left parties.

Moreover, Finance Ministry bureaucrats add that the IMF has in the past lent money to Pakistan in the middle of an election, and even to the chronically unstable governments of Venezuela and Brazil. Also, India could get around $450 million from the IMF's special contingency fund to help countries deal with the current oil crisis. There is also the possibility that the IMF—apprehensive of elections resulting in a hung Parliament or a BJP government coming to power—could refuse to abide by earlier agreements.

The conditions laid down by the IMF are always a political hot potato. Slash the budget deficit, the IMF will insist, by lowering subsidies, the most obvious being on food and fertilisers. That would trigger off an increase in prices, and a fall in production and farm profitability. But the Congress(I) will not permit anything so drastic. "We will agree to sectoral adjustments. But no question of removing subsidies," said a Congress(I) source. The present government concurs.

Aside from lowering subsidies, the IMF could ask for a cut in expenditure by freezing dearness allowances and curbing farm loan write offs. But for the Government, both are last-resort options, particularly with Devi Lal vociferously resisting any curbs in the farm loan write offs. Meanwhile, the Government is hoping that as in the case of the 1981 IMF loan, no drastic conditions are imposed.


ACCELERATE FOREIGN INVESTMENT

ACCORDING to official figures, foreign investment in India is less than $200 million a year. But it can be increased greatly with the appropriate incentives. One of the solutions is liberalisation.

However, even though Ajit Singh,

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Wyeth

Tradition & Transition

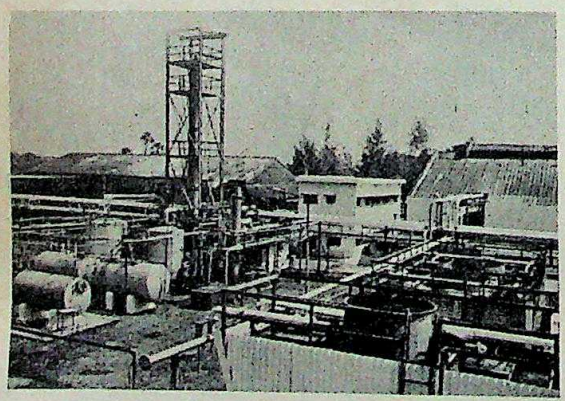
A TRADITION OF EXCELLENCE

Wyeth Laboratories Limited (WLL), a 30 year old **high technology pharmaceutical company,** pioneered the manufacture of Corticosteroids and hormones in India. Today, at its sophisticated manufacturing facility at Ghatkopar in Bombay, WLL manufactures Prednisolone and related Corticosteroids and their formulations starting right from the basic stage - Dioscorea root - all under one roof.

WLL is a leading supplier of high technology bulk drugs to several pharmaceutical companies.

The promoter and technical collaborator of WLL— **American Home Products Corporation of U.S.A., (AHPC)** is a leading manufacturer and marketeer of health care products. In 1989, AHPC's net sales totalled $ 6.7 billion (Rs. 11,600 crores) and net income $ 1.1 billion (Rs. 1,900 crores) - marking the 37th consecutive year when the sales and dividends were increased over those of the previous year. AHPC ranked 68th in the '1989 Fortune 500' listing.

WLL's track record has also been impressive. For the year ended 31st March, 1990, WLL registered a net profit of Rs. 90 lakhs on a turnover of Rs. 1964 lakhs yielding a healthy earning of Rs. 10 per share. The Company has a **24-year long uninterrupted dividend record.**

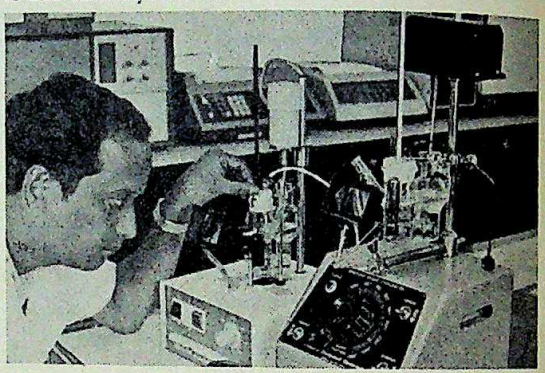


PRODUCTS TRUSTED BY THE MEDICAL PROFESSION

WLL's Corticosteroid formulations WYSOLONE (market leader), WYMESONE and WYCORT are used in a wide range of severe disorders - often life threatening. WLL is also the largest manufacturer of oral contraceptives - OVRAL and OVRAL-L in the country. WLL's non-steroidal products, AMPIPEN and SEREPAX are well accepted by the medical profession.

STRONG R & D

Strong emphasis on Research and Development has enabled WLL to develop manufacturing processes for high technology steroid drug intermediates which are exported to free currency markets.



TOWARDS NEW HORIZONS OF GROWTH

WLL stands ready to serve the needs of our people better than ever.

There is a two-fold impetus that will take WLL to new heights. First, the global strengths of AHPC, the **'Wyeth' name, logo and trade.marks of AHPC,** to which, WLL will continue to have access.

And second, the forthcoming dilution of foreign equity holding of AHPC to 40% will give a non-FERA status to the Company - with this, the Company will be able to carve out a larger share of the fast growing formulations market taking advantage of its existing strong base of basic bulk drug manufacture.

WYETH LOOKS FORWARD TO A BRIGHT FUTURE.
A FUTURE IT WOULD LIKE TO SHARE WITH YOU.

AWAIT FERA DILUTION

WYETH LABORATORIES LIMITED

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Wyeth

A commitment to growth in the finest Wyeth tradition

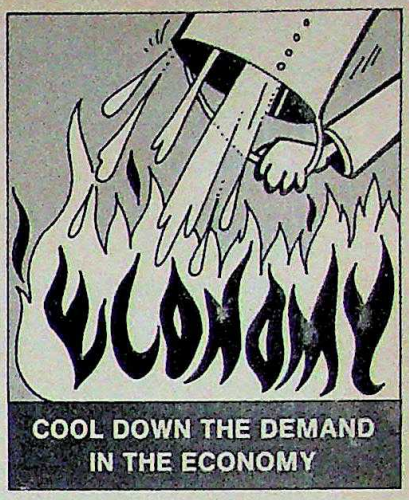
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the previous industry minister, had put forward a formula to liberalise foreign investments, the move had been opposed by Chandra Shekhar when he was still associated with the National Front government and by the Left parties on grounds of "selling out" to multinationals. As a result nothing came of the proposal. Today, even Congress(I) circles regard the proposals as excessively liberal. "We do not favour the kind of structural changes suggested by Ajit Singh," said a Congress(I) source. "Ajit Singh talked of delicensing entire groups of industries including defence. This is something we simply cannot accept."

Nor has the party even agreed to the Ajit Singh formula of treating foreign equity of less than 40 per cent in a new venture on par with Indian companies and exempt from the Foreign Exchange Regulations Act. "There must also be a 40 per cent if not higher block holding by an Indian partner in such a venture," asserts the Congress(I). "Otherwise, we will be taken over."

But now the Shekhar Government appears to have changed its mind on foreign investment. The Finance Minister, Yashwant Sinha, has promised to provide the political will necessary to dismantle controls and liberalise huge areas for foreign investment *(see interview)*. In fact, he even goes as far as to claim that under Rajiv Gandhi some fine balances had not been achieved with foreign investment moving into nonpriority areas. But whether the present government can muster Congress(I) support for the kind of sweeping changes Sinha has in mind, remains to be seen.



COOL DOWN THE DEMAND IN THE ECONOMY

THIS will also help in reducing the import demands. Ways of doing this are:

- Cut the budget deficit. Every rupee

YASHWANT SINHA

"We'll scrap controls"

DESPITE the economic crisis facing the country Finance Minister Yashwant Sinha isn't in the least bit daunted. He was the picture of confidence as he spoke to Principal Correspondent SHAHNAZ ANKLESARIA AIYAR *last fortnight. Excerpts:*

PRAMOD PUSHKARNA



Q. *Will your avowedly socialist prime minister ask for an* IMF *loan?*

A. Today we have a major economic crisis on our hands—a deteriorating balance of payments situation, an increasing budget deficit and the impact of both on prices. It is within this context that we must look for solutions. The Government is still to make up its mind on how to tackle the balance of payments. Going to the IMF is one option. The other is bilateral agreements with countries like Japan and West Germany. We can also appeal to the NRIs.

Q. *So far* NRIs *have been coy about investing in India. Why should they pour in money at this period of instability?*

A. I am confident they will rise to the occasion. What bothers us about the IMF is its conditions. But I cannot tell you of the government decision as there isn't one. We have to discuss the options with the prime minister.

Q. *Would you agree to their condition of cutting subsidies?*

A. I'm only a two-and-a-half day old minister, grant me that handicap. Controlling prices is my priority as they bother the common man.

Q. *But isn't it all interconnected?*

A. Yes, to make an impact on prices it's necessary to improve the balance of payments and contain the budget deficit. All wasteful government expenditure will be eliminated. Like inaugurations, dinners, travel.

Q. *But this will only make a marginal difference to the revenue deficit.*

A. Even if our efforts result in a rupee being saved, it shall be done. We want to get out of this five-star culture in the Government. We cannot tell people to tighten their belts if we do not do so ourselves.

Q. *Will you encourage foreign investment?*

A. Of course. We'll liberalise procedures, we'll dismantle all controls.

Q. *Does this mean the doors will be thrown wide open?*

A. There will be specific sectors for foreign investment.

Q. *But the previous government's two lists—negative and positive—came to nothing because of the political upheavals.*

A. I don't know about these lists, if they are delineated, we will look at them. Foreign investors do not come here because of the delays. We will stick to specified time schedules.

Q. *Though Rajiv had the will to liberalise, things went wrong. How do you plan to steer clear?*

A. When you liberalise, certain fine balances must be achieved. Rajiv could not do this fine tuning and his government allowed investors to go into nonpriority areas like TVs, videos, cosmetics.

Q. *How will you deal with economic offenders?*

A. We will send out the message that the law should take its course. We will not discriminate against or spare anyone. I will tell all my officials that I will protect them from political interference, they should go ahead with their job.

Q. *Will there be any changes in your ministry's senior advisors?*

A. Nothing yet. I have no preconceptions about anyone.

Q. *Why do you think you were asked to head the Finance Ministry?*

A. *(smiles)* Everyone says it's a hot seat. But I'm enjoying myself, I'm full of confidence.

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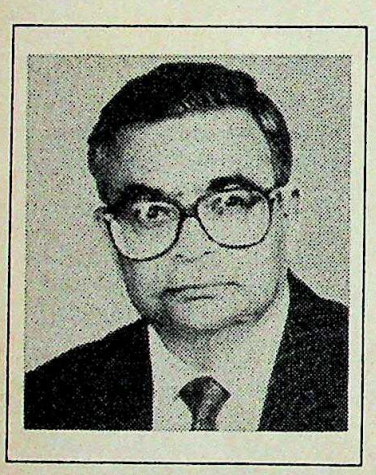
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GARWARE
गरवारे

Garware Paints Ltd.

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S. V. Thackersey Marg, Bombay 400 020.

STATEMENT OF SHRI C.B. GARWARE, CHAIRMAN, GARWARE PAINTS LIMITED ON THE OCCASION OF THE FIFTYTHIRD ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE SHAREHOLDERS OF THE COMPANY ON 31ST OCTOBER,1990



Ladies and Gentlemen,

I welcome you to the Fiftythird Annual General Meeting of your Company.

The abridged Accounts for the year ended 31st March, 1990 together with the Auditors' and Directors' Reports have been with you for some time now, and with your permission, I will take them as read. We have sent to you the Abridged Accounts this time and I trust those of you who wanted to have unabridged audited Accounts have already obtained the same by now.

SALES AND PROFITS

Sales for the year ended 31st March, 1990 were Rs.72.31 crores which showed a 31% increase over the previous period's sales of Rs.41.27 crores, on an annualised basis. This is one of the highest growth rates in the industry during the year under review. Gross Profit was Rs. 108.95 lacs against Rs.72.75 lacs for the previous period. Profit after Tax of Rs.60.45 lacs was a record in the history of the Company. You will appreciate that the Company made these achievements despite a steep increase in the prices of raw materials, hike in excise duty and rising overheads as also stiff competition in the paint industry.

DIVIDEND

Your Directors have recommended a Dividend of 16% for the year under review. I am sure you will consider this satisfactory.

CURRENT YEAR

As you are aware, owing to the Gulf crisis, there is an acute shortage of all petroleum based products and the prices of these materials have also shot up by leaps and bounds. Sales for the first six months upto the end of September 1990 were less than those for the previous year's corresponding period as there was a go-slow by labour. We have, however, now reached an agreement with the Union and hope that the production will pick up. If the Oil crisis is resolved,we will be able to recover some of the lost ground in the second half of this year.

The Company has now received the technical know-how for the manufacture of Coil Coatings from M/s. Becker Industrifarg AB, Sweden, for which a collaboration agreement was signed in 1989. We are confident that this addition to our product range will greatly enhance our sales and profits.

I feel proud to mention that the Company was honoured with the ARCH OF EUROPE GOLD STAR AWARD by Business Initiative Directions, an international body of Texas, U.S.A. for its contribution to the business world.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

On behalf of the Board of Directors, I wish to place on record our deep appreciation of the sincere work of our employees at all levels.

I also take this opportunity to express our gratitude to our bankers, financial institutions, shareholders and customers for their support, co-operation and patronage.

Thank you,

C.B. GARWARE
Chairman

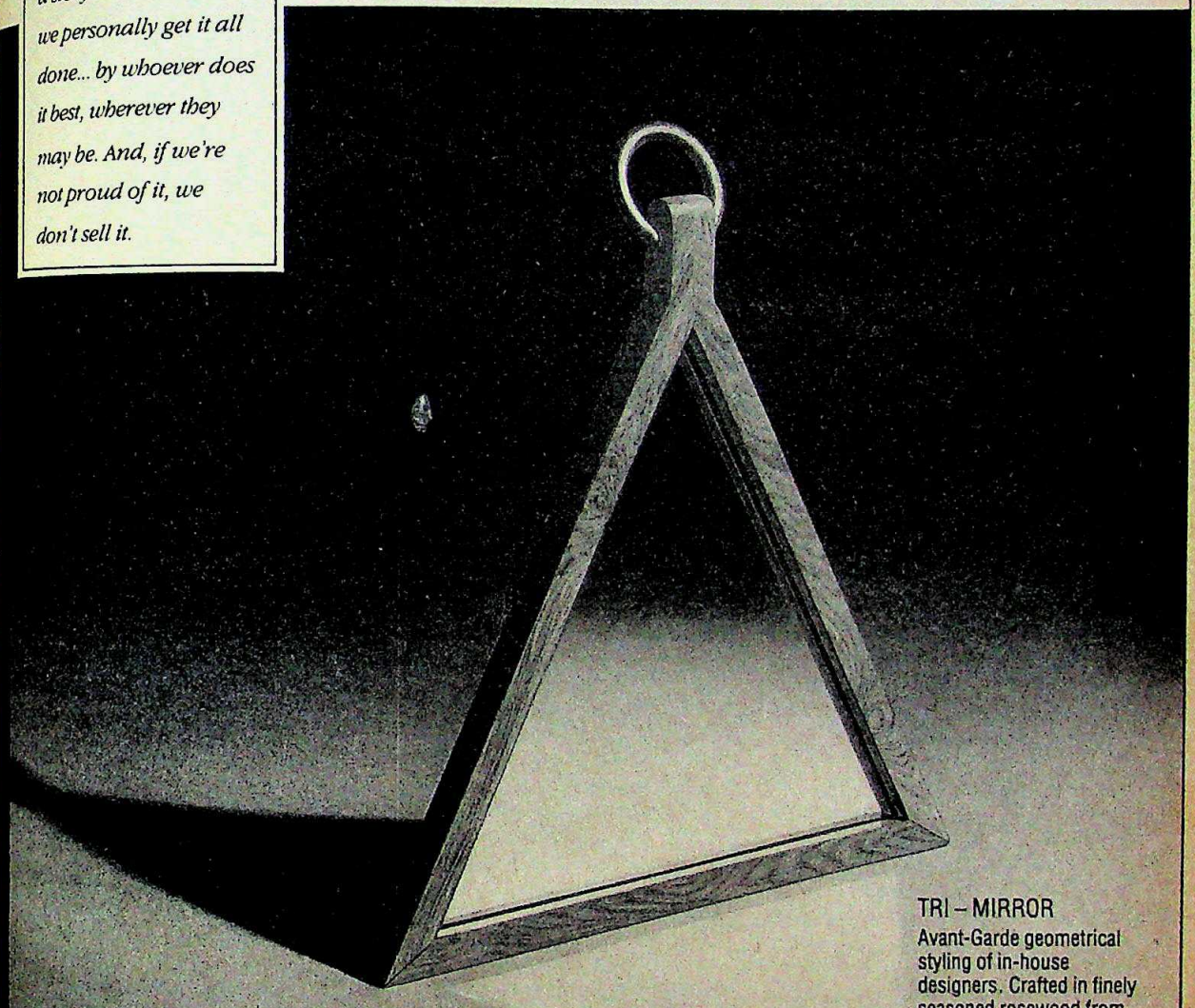
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cut in the budget deficit cuts Rs 5 of demand, since the budget deficit pumps high powered money into the economy. How can this be done? The Congress(I) throws up its hands in despair, claiming there is little serious thinking in the party on this matter. The finance minister promises to do this by cutting the huge revenue deficit. One way, he says is by curbing the Government's "five-star culture" of functioning. But the impact of such cosmetic cuts will only be marginal.

► Improve private savings. However, people suddenly will not become abstentious and save more. And even if this government encourages them to do so by raising interest rates, the impact will only be felt in the long run.

► Sharply increase revenue by raising taxes and administered prices. But with elections almost certainly around the corner, this is one option which is clearly a non-starter.

► Control government spending. The efficient way to do this, according to economists, is to freeze dearness allowance increments and place limits on dividends. But Sinha doesn't agree. Nothing to hurt the electorate, he says.

► Slash planned investments. But this is a soft option, deleterious in the long term.

► Impose physical control on imports. But as this could create a scarcity of imported raw materials, hurting production and excise duty collections, it is unlikely to be done today.

► Sell assets abroad—like gold, for instance. "Impossible," shudders the Congress(I). "The people will never forgive us, they'll say *sona bech diya*." And they know from past experience. In 1978, internal sales of gold became a scandal because sales were permitted only to licensed goldsmiths and the latter formed a cartel of bidders making a mockery of the process. Selling public sector shares is another alternative which is yet to be considered.

► Borrow from commercial banks (at interest rates linked to the London Inter Banks Official Rate currently at 8 per cent) and NRIs. Get larger private investments. While bank loans can be arranged quickly, other loans will take time to organise.

For the moment, given Sinha's views, it is clear that the Government will do nothing drastic to the economy. Only a government with a strong mandate to govern can do the drastic overhauling the economy so urgently needs. Until then the downward slide will continue.

—SHAHNAZ ANKLESARIA AIYAR

RURAL WINDOW BY MURAD ALI BAIG

Unfruitful Labours

NO farmer faces greater risks than the fruit growers of India's hill areas. The output of cereals from their meagre plots cannot compete with that of the rich irrigated plains. The climate can vary from valley to valley. The crops have to be defended against pests, scab, fungus, rot, insects and birds. Fruit and vegetables are perishable leaving growers at the mercy of uncontrollable market forces. Transport is difficult and expensive...but worst of all are the unstable politics that manipulate support prices, input costs and land ceilings.

Apple harvest time is frantically busy in Himachal Pradesh, which produces a third of India's 1.1 million-tonne crop. Fruit laden lorries grind down the lush green hills, crawl along narrow rain damaged roads and shudder over bridges across raging torrents. Farmers are unhappy. Kotgarh, the main fruit growing area, had widespread hail which pitted the otherwise excellent fruit, depressing its market value. This 'culled' fruit is hard to sell. Kulu district had damage at blossom time, which will reduce output by more than 50 per cent.

To make matters worse, the state Government arbitrarily reduced the support price for 'culled' fruit from Rs 1.70 to Rs 1.30 a kg. Growers only earn about Rs 5.50 for their best table apples (excluding packing and transport costs) so they need a fair support price. With production costs around Rs 2.50 a kg, they face severe losses. Ironically, the Government is also a loser for farmers refuse to sell at these prices and the Government apple juice plants are virtually closed.

Bhollu Ram, along with his four brothers have a five-acre orchard. He says: "Some years, we can earn 2 lakh rupees but sometimes almost nothing. So we give out our orchard on contract and I work at a nearby tourist hotel." By contrast there is Ashok Khullar, whose family has been Kulu growers since 1832, who says: "We have to take a long-term view. It takes eight years for trees to fruit but then there are good rewards...at least in alternate years. The Government reduced our holdings under land ceilings and gave one acre plots of well developed orchard to landless farmers. Almost all have been sold off. Why should anyone bother to develop orchards now when there can be further land ceilings?"

MURAD ALI BAIG



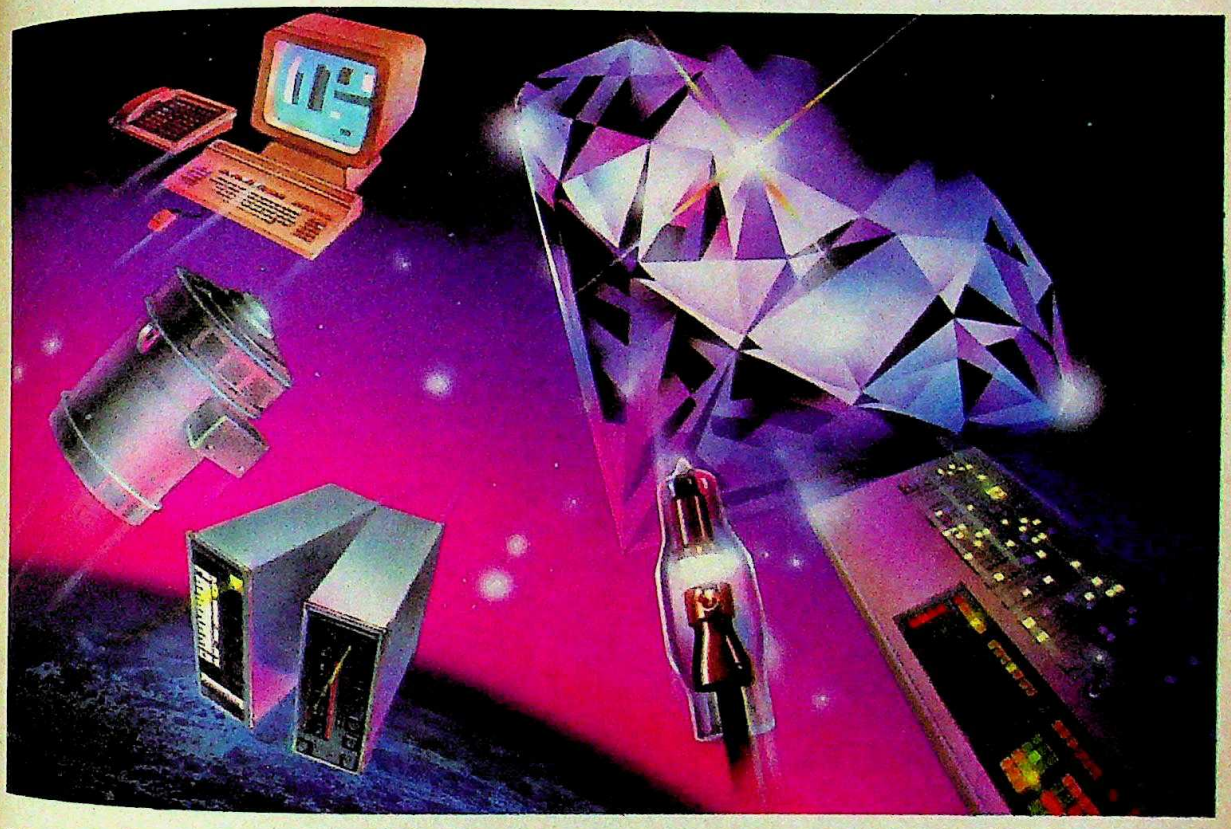
Bhollu Ram: irregular income

The Government has invested heavily in horticultural research and extention. Scientists are convinced that the meagre yields averaging 2.5 tonnes an acre can be doubled and that the area under fruits can be trebled. Higher production of fruit and vegetables are the only way India's hill areas can prosper. These poverty prone areas, however, need an assured market and political stability much more than technology. With better transport, cheaper packing, more cold storages, food processing of their wasted surplus and stable prices, production would increase and the high retail prices in the cities could also come down within the reach of the common man.

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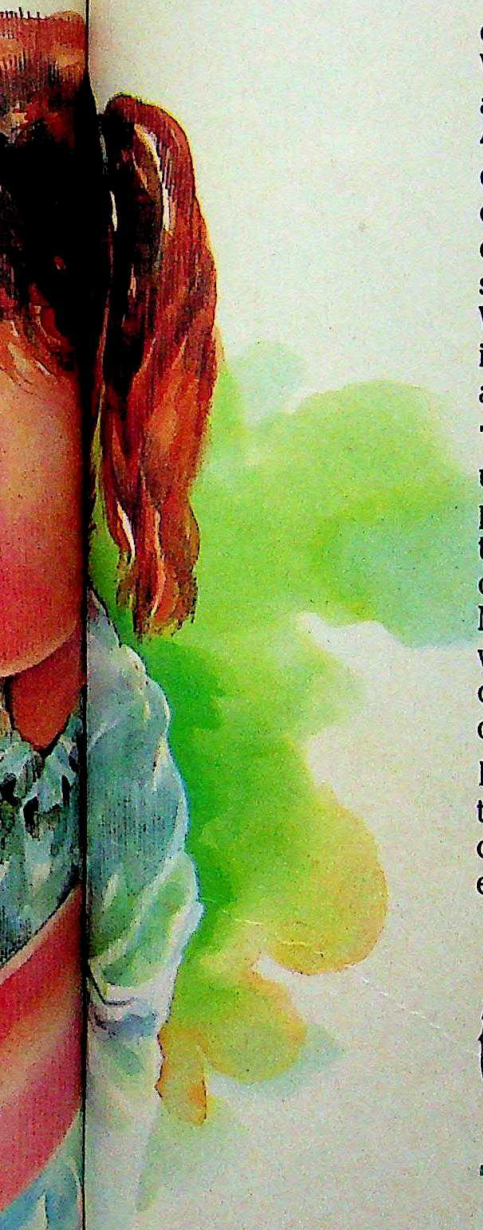
A glimpse of a corporate philosophy, that holds community welfare close to the heart.





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For a company that is over four decades old and evolving into a corporate force to reckon with, human values still remain sacred. At The Andhra Sugars, the corporate philosophy inspires us to serve society. A commitment we've honoured for over forty years.

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The Andhra Sugars has contributed significantly to the establishment of the ultra modern, Sri Mullapudi Venkataramanamma Memorial Hospital, to benefit the people in and around Tanuku. This 200 bed hospital will expand its capacity to 400 beds. With a view to provide educational facilities to the community, The Andhra Sugars has contributed to the setting up of one of the best polytechnics in the region in terms of the quality of education. Fully equipped laboratories, hostel, library and sprawling playgrounds are some of the highlights of this polytechnic. We are proud that many meritorious students have passed through its portals. Further, high schools have also been set up near Tanuku and at Kovvur.

The Andhra Sugars has made yeoman contribution for setting up the Sri Rangaraya Medical College at Kakinada which has produced many brilliant doctors. To cater to the cultural needs of the community, The Andhra Sugars is helping in the construction of a massive library and cultural centre - Sri Mullapudi Thimmaraju Memorial Library and Cultural Centre, at Tanuku. The Cultural Centre will provide a much needed forum for the exposure of the rich cultural talent. Enlightening the people by bringing to them a glimpse of our rich cultural heritage.

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THERMOWARE

Filling a Vacuum

A new generation of household items make a mark

THE heat is on—quite literally. The working couples of the '80s have generated a new market of thermoware products—plug-in casseroles, lunch boxes, flasks—to meet the demands of a hectic work schedule which does not allow the luxury of cooking a meal twice, or even the bother of reheating it. With the attractive advantage of keeping food warm, water cool, and beverages at the appropriate temperatures thermoware products are increasingly becoming the new necessity for middle class families. Nowadays they obviously prefer to eat it hot.

The thermoware industry is today the new boom sector in consumer goods. The challenge has been picked up by the manufacturers already entrenched in the vacuum flask and other kitchenware market. And the market leaders acknowledge that it was a new demand made by the middle class working couples that created the thermoware carnival.

Eagle, the company that is dominating the thermoware market, started it all almost as an afterthought. According to the company's Executive Director Mumtazali Padamsee, between 1975 and 1979 thermoware products were introduced into the market as complimentary, give-away pieces of their upgraded vacuumware. The turning point was the Steamax, the plug-in 24-hour food-warmer which was launched at the beginning of this year. Says Naushad Padamsee, managing director at the company's Talegaon plant: "From a simple casserole we made a powered one. We make 10,000 Steamax pieces a month and all of them are instantly sold out."

The company's latest thermoware offer, the nylon, collapsible water bottle Squeezee has sold about 1.5 lakh pieces between its launch in June and October this year. Though priced at Rs 150, Squeezee has caught the consumer's imagination, especially that of the schoolgoing child. The new water bottle is something of a fad among the children.

Snapping at Eagle's heels is Milton Plastics, a Bombay-based manufacturing firm of household plasticware. Chiranjiv Vaghani, a partner in the company, says that when they entered the market in 1982 they used thermocol and glasswool as insulation materials before adopting polyurethane foam (PUF), and their initial products were a water bucket, a jug and an ice-pail. Eight years later they have a range of about 250 products.

The overnight success growth of Hope, a company that entered the thermoware scene as late as 1985-86, gives an indication of the extent of the market. Started with a bank loan of Rs 10 lakh, Hope has by 1989-90 reached a turnover of Rs 72 lakh, and expects to touch Rs 3 crore in 1990-91.

Wide range of choice: lunch boxes, casseroles, flasks

SHARAD SAXENA



"We make 10,000 Steamax pieces a month and they are instantly sold out."

NAUSHAD PADAMSEE
Eagle Managing Director



The Madras-based entrant headed by Ambalal Jain, moved from stainless steelware manufacture straight to thermoware, bypassing the vacuumware stage, which was the diversification route followed by Eagle, the traditional leader in the field. Jain is confident that the market in thermoware products would register an exponential growth.

The company's latest product is the hot tiffin carrier—a stainless steel version of the hot lunch-pack—which is aimed at the upper middle class market. Jain claims that each container in the carrier is insulated from the other, and that hot *sambar* and ice-cream could be carried to work without even a little bit of bother.

Innovation is the breath of the new sector, and Eagle's Naushad disclosed that the company would soon be out with an insulated compartments-packed carrybag.

Though there are now nearly

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50 small units in the thermoware manufacturing sector operating from Madras and Bombay vying with Eagle and Milton, it is agreed that it is a seller's market, and everyone can sell all that is manufactured and more. There seem to be immense prospects for an untapped exports boom too. While Eagle wants to set up plants in Indonesia and in the Soviet Union, Hope is already exporting casseroles to the Soviet Union, and has in hand orders worth Rs 1 crore. Milton has set up an exports division and its products are actively present in the markets of Canada, Australia, West Asia, Sweden and Finland. But for Milton too the biggest market is the Soviet Union.

The promise of expanding markets is reflected in the huge investments in the aggressive advertising campaigns. The newcomer Hope has increased its advertising budget from Rs 4 lakh in 1987 to Rs 25 lakh this year. And Eagle is spending almost Rs 2 crore this year.

A closely related product technology breakthrough of thermoware is that of the stainless steel vacuum flask. Up till now the available technology was that of the glass vacuum, which was breakable. Stainless steel vacuum offered the durability advantage. The emerging leader in the field is the Butterfly Group of Madras. Its company making the new flasks, Gangadharam Appliances Public Limited, generated Rs 7.5 crore from a public issue in June, which was oversubscribed fivefold.

The market for stainless steel vacuum flasks is overlapping that of the thermoware, both in the domestic and foreign markets. Eagle and Hope are the major players, though there is a dispute between them as to who was responsible for the innovative technology. While Eagle asserts that it was the first, the Butterfly Group makes the safe claim that its steel vacuum flask was the first indigenously manufactured one. The dispute over innovation is a negligible point of debate compared to the market which is attracting even new companies like Hyderabad-based Swan Vacuum Systems. Started in collaboration with the South Korean Hanbaek Corporation and a financial base of Rs 1.25 crore, the company has within a year reached a turnover of Rs 3 crore. Enthuses the company's Financial Director Onleddu Rekha: "The industry will only grow and grow. There's no upper limit." Clearly, the vacuum was just waiting to be filled.

—ANAND VISWANATHAN in Madras and SHIV TANEJA in Bombay

BUSINESSPEAK

M.R. MAYYA

Coping with Growth



AS executive director of the 115-year-old Bombay Stock Exchange (BSE)—by far the oldest and largest exchange in the country—59-year-old M.R. Mayya stands at the helm of a colossus: current market capitalisation on the BSE is about Rs 81,000 crore; which accounts for about 90 per cent of the country's total market capitalisation. Mayya, who has 35 years of experience in dealing with a variety of financial markets, recently spoke to Senior Correspondent SHIV TANEJA in Bombay about some of the changes that will be brought about so that the BSE can cope with the burgeoning growth in business.

THE kind of growth that the Indian capital markets, and Bombay in particular, have witnessed recently is something we could not have even imagined a few years ago. The total annual turnover on the BSE has gone up from Rs 6,134 crore in 1985 to over Rs 28,000 crore in 1989.

In the short-term we have to deal with this growth with the given resources and in the long-term we have to put in place systems. Despite having upgraded our computer systems to handle double the number of transactions, it is not enough. This has led to delays in making settlements and payments. The number of daily deals has doubled from 40,000 to 80,000 a day in one year, while our computer's capacity is only 50,000 a day. So we are going to automate the trading of the shares which are quoted on the non-specified list or "B" list. Then we will take up the scrips in the "A" list, or the specified shares. This will cut down the time for dealing with settlements and payouts. The automated trading system for the "B" list should be operational by December 1991, with the "A" list a year later.

On the depository side, every deal—a buy and sell transaction—has to go through eight steps. We want to shorten this process. The Industrial Development Bank of India has floated the Stock Holding Corporation of India which takes care of the *badla* (cotango) transactions for the financial institutions. For the other investors, Bank of India has floated the Bank of India Shareholding Ltd to provide the same services. The computerisation process has begun, and for one of two scrips it ought to be ready by January 1991. Once all the scrips in *badla* have been done, it will be extended to the other shares too. The ultimate aim is to have a certificate-less society.

Our other problem is the lack of space. About half the space in the 28-storeyed BSE building is occupied by the financial institutions. We are asking them to move to other premises and are also constructing an annexe to give us a modernised trading ring. The ultimate aim is to reach a point where trading will be done on a computer. But till then we need a modern trading ring. All going well, it will be ready by Diwali 1991.

The next step is to develop an integrated telephone exchange where stock-brokers can talk to one another without having to dial numbers like ordinary phone calls. The final objective will be to have a single telephone exchange for all the stock exchanges around the country. On the issue of a national stock exchange, the PTI Stock Scan was introduced in August 1987 and links the five major markets: Bombay, Calcutta, Madras, Delhi and Ahmedabad. A national market with multiple membership should develop in the next three to four years. Arbitrage transactions (dealing of two different markets and making use of the price differential) lends a national integration of stock exchanges and while it should not be encouraged, is not such a bad thing.

We have also taken it upon ourselves to develop the business of stock-broking. So the BSE has started a training institute in January 1989. Investor protection is another important aspect, and we have not neglected it. In October 1986, we started a consumer protection fund.

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Lufthansa Cargo

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MARKETS

Scrips Slide

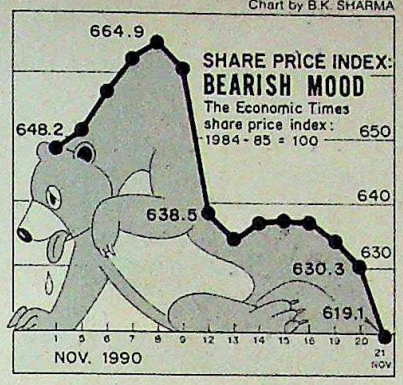
The mood is bearish

As many of the market operators continued to square up their outstanding positions, the Bombay Stock Exchange (BSE) 30-share sensitive index continued to register a downward slide. This despite the fact that a goodly portion of the trading in the last few days has been in the cash scrip, and hence is not reflected on the BSE index. The mood in Dalal Street is decidedly bearish.

With the appointment of Yashwant Sinha as the Union minister for finance, and Subramaniam Swamy as Union minister for commerce last fortnight, the market initially reacted somewhat positively—the BSE index climbed to 1,337.79 points, but this was before Unit Trust of India (UTI) got into the act.

The mutual funds were relatively inactive last fortnight, but as net sellers. UTI's activities in the middle of the fortnight eclipsed all other activity—business or political. In a move that left most market operators stunned, it is believed that UTI placed sell orders of 50,000 shares for most of the pivotals—including Tata Steel, Telco and Reliance—at the counters of half a dozen brokers.

Chart by B.K. SHARMA



It is understood that UTI has been forced to liquidate a part of its holdings due to sales of over Rs 600 crore worth of units by public sector corporations such as Indian Oil Corporation and the Oil and Natural Gas Commission. Now these holdings will have to be repurchased by UTI.

While it is clear that UTI will certainly not be able to finance the repurchase of the full amount through the sale of its holdings, it will have to raise short-term funds in the call money market to generate the balance. Towards the end of the fortnight, there was considerable activity from the other mutual funds as well: SBI Capital Markets was a net seller, Canbank Mutual Fund turned buyer of Telco as the scrip closed the session one point lower at Rs 226.25, after it had gone down to Rs 212.50 during mid-session trading. The Bank of India Mutual Fund and PNB Mutual Fund, however, completely stayed away from the market.

The Associated Cement Companies shares, around which most of the speculative activity over the last few months has remained centred, continued to witness heavy squaring up of the outstanding positions. The result of this move was that the price of this share dropped a further Rs 130 to close the session at Rs 2,020.

Earlier in the day's trading, the price had dropped to Rs 1,900. This lower closing on most of the pivotals is also indicative of the general sentiment that currently prevails in the market: one of nervousness and general concern over the economic crisis that is most likely going to hit the country in the next six to eight months.

ACTIVE STOCKS

	1990 HIGH	LOW	CLOSE 21.11.90	Change in Fortnight
Ashok Leyland	143.75	69.50	130.00	10.00 +
Associated Cement	2625.00	325.00	2150.00	400.00 –
Asian Paints	305.00	207.50	225.00	27.50 –
Atlas Copco	68.00	32.50	54.00	2.00 +
Bajaj Auto	770.00	355.00	622.50	37.50 –
Baroda Rayon	1925.00	617.50	660.00	200.00 –
Bata India	107.00	62.50	95.00	9.00 –
Ballarpur	325.00	120.00	266.00	7.00 –
Birla Jute	240.00	50.50	200.00	28.00 –
Blow Plast	140.00	34.50	85.00	5.00 –
Bombay Dyeing	445.00	157.50	170.00	22.50 –
Britannia Ind.	167.00	97.00	140.00	12.00 –
Brooke Bond	175.00	91.00	126.00	11.00 –
Cadbury India	192.50	133.75	145.00	22.50 –
Century Textiles	4850.00	2420.00	4350.00	225.00 –
Colgate Palmolive	360.00	176.25	283.75	21.25* –
Cyanamid	150.00	87.50	115.00	5.00 +
DCM	385.00	45.50	292.00	142.00 +
Dunlop	93.00	51.75	66.00	2.00 –
E.I. Hotels	65.25	50.00	58.00	2.00 –
Escorts	200.00	77.75	157.00	8.00 –
Finolex Cables	410.00	200.00	240.00	35.00 –
Garware Nylon	71.00	48.00	52.50	3.75 –
G.E. Shipping	54.75	31.75	34.50	3.00 –
G.S.F.C.	275.00	155.00	187.50	22.50 –
Grasim Ind.	277.50	106.00	200.00	12.50 –
Hind. Aluminium	417.50	205.00	280.00	50.00 –
Hind. Ciba	1900.00	960.00	1200.00	125.00 –
Hindustan Lever	172.50	101.00	138.75	3.75 –
Hindustan Motors	58.50	19.80	31.25	6.75 –
Hoechst	3400.00	1295.00	2700.00	100.00 –
ICI India Ltd.	72.00	35.25	47.00	5.00 –
Indian Organic	91.25	46.50	53.75	12.50 –
Indian Rayon	175.00	84.00	115.00	10.00 –
Indrol	320.00	161.25	195.00	85.00** –
Ingersoll-Rand	305.00	190.00	280.00	nil
ITC	182.00	48.75	146.00	4.00 +
J.K. Synthetics	90.00	49.00	52.00	3.00 –
Kinetic Engineering	255.00	130.00	200.00	nil
Kirloskar Cummins	125.00	65.00	112.50	5.00 +
KSB Pumps	260.00	175.00	220.00	10.00 –
Larsen & Toubro	180.00	57.00	126.25	0.75 +
Lipton	112.00	65.00	70.00	11.25 –
LML Ltd.	83.75	15.00	52.00	5.50 –
Madura Coats	285.00	100.50	242.00	16.00 –
M&M	130.00	67.50	90.00	10.00 –
Milk Food	280.00	115.00	165.00	nil
Motor Industries	1400.00	750.00	800.00	150.00 –
Mukand Ltd.	275.00	127.00	200.00	20.00 –
National Organic	1900.00	1070.00	1125.00	325.00 –
Nestle India	172.50	101.75	137.00	10.00 –
Nirlon	42.50	13.00	27.00	nil
Orkay Silk Mills	61.00	14.50	33.50	6.00 –
Peico Electronics	78.00	24.00	66.00	0.50 –
Pfizer	113.75	60.00	85.00	7.50 –
Raymond	175.00	70.00	125.00	15.00 –
Reckitt & Colman	270.00	178.00	242.00	13.00 –
Reliance Industries	245.00	50.00	206.50	19.50 –
Siemens India	162.50	96.00	126.25	8.75 –
Shaw Wallace	122.00	65.00	93.00	5.00 –
Shriram Fibres	74.00	43.00	57.00	4.00 +
SKF Bearings	2775.00	1240.00	2450.00	nil
SPIC	81.00	47.00	54.00	5.00 +
Tata Steel	275.00	103.25	186.00	9.00 –
Telco	272.50	110.00	227.50	10.00 +
Titan Watches	110.00	31.00	83.75	6.25 –
Vam Organic	205.00	115.00	155.00	20.00 –
Videocon Int.	600.00	105.00	430.00	35.00 –
Voltas	145.00	63.00	110.00	10.00 –
Wimco	52.50	16.75	26.00	4.00 –

* Ex-dividend
** Ex-bonus

WORLD VALUE OF RUPEE

COUNTRY	CURRENCY	UNIT	TT Selling Rates Rs	TT Buying Rates Rs
Australia	Dollar	1	13.9754	13.8251
Austria	Shilling	100	175.0900	173.4064
Bahrain	Dinar	1	N/A	N/A
Bangladesh	Taka	100	52.1680	51.3797
Canada	Dollar	1	15.7211	15.5856
Denmark	Kroner	1	3.2273	3.1950
Egypt	Pound	1	6.8446	6.7292
France	Franc	1	3.7106	3.6166
Hong Kong	Dollar	1	2.3381	2.3156
Indonesia	Rupiah	100	0.9789	0.9670
Iran	Rial	100	N/A	N/A
Italy	Lira	100	1.6462	1.6218
Japan	Yen	100	14.4300	14.0647
Kenya	Shilling	1	0.7985	0.7841
Malaysia	Dollar	1	6.7783	6.7117
Mauritius	Rupee	1	1.3005	1.2656
Nepal	Rupee	1	0.6355	0.6273
Netherlands	Guilder	1	10.9877	10.8771
Pakistan	Rupee	1	0.8429	0.8311
Singapore	Dollar	1	10.6596	10.5525
Spain	Peseta	1	0.1949	0.1921
Sri Lanka	Rupee	1	0.4523	0.4453
Sweden	Kroner	1	3.2937	3.2607
Switzerland	Franc	1	14.6297	14.4795
Tanzania	Shilling	1	0.0958	0.0925
Thailand	Baht	100	73.4139	71.5645
UK	Pound	1	35.6697	35.4108
USA	Dollar	1	18.2066	18.0343
UAE	Dirham	1	N/A	N/A
USSR	Rouble	1	22.7870	22.7847
Germany	Deutschmark	1	12.5156	12.2100

These rates were supplied by The Bank of Tokyo Limited, New Delhi and quoted between the banks on 21.11.90.

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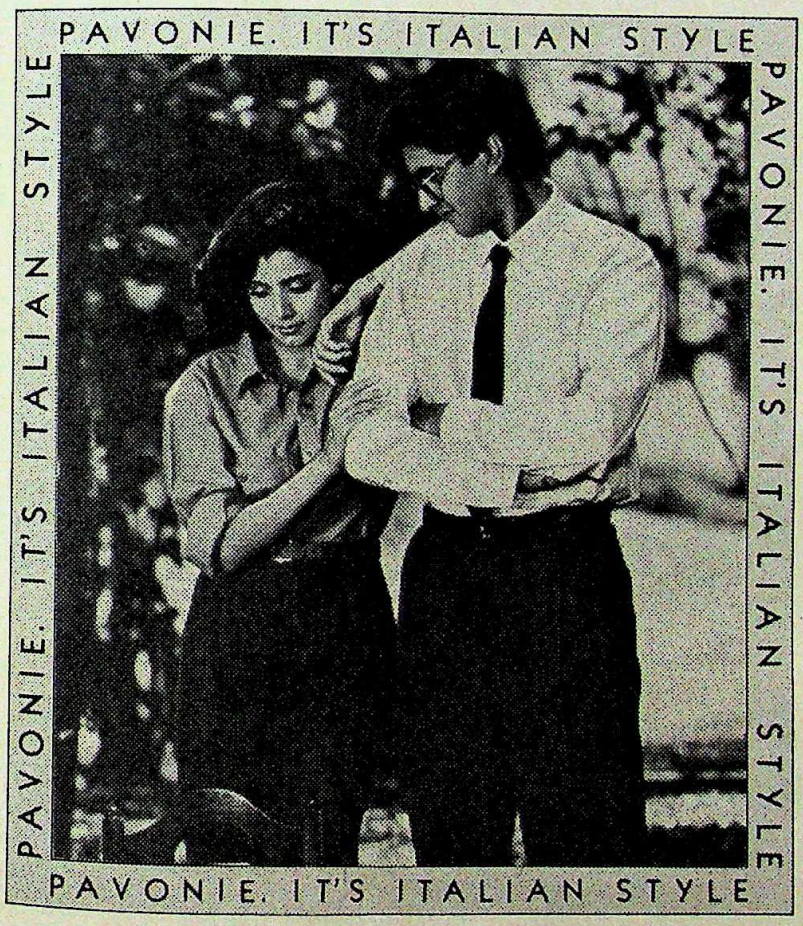


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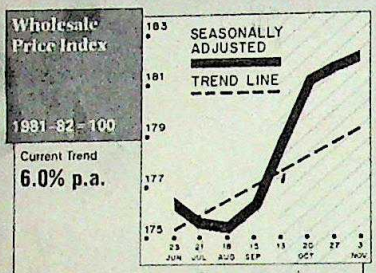


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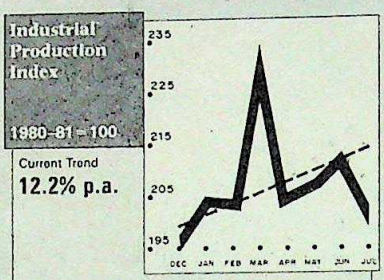
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Overall a disappointing fortnight for the economy—industrial production fell even as key sectoral inputs and prices continued to climb. Monetary policy gave conflicting signals with credit contracting and money supply expanding.

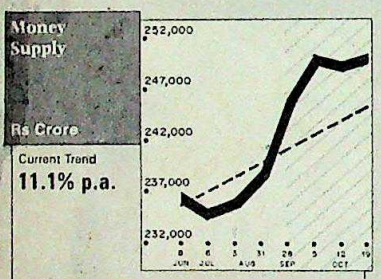
All data are seasonally adjusted. Current trends are computed on the basis of six months' (weekly data) or one-and-a-half years' (monthly data) figures.



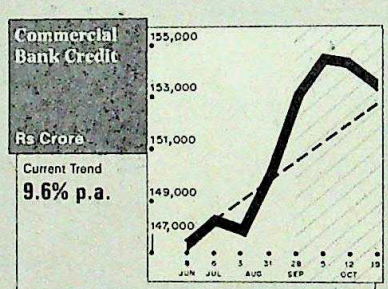
Wholesale prices continue to rise—the new Government will have to view anti-inflationary policies afresh.



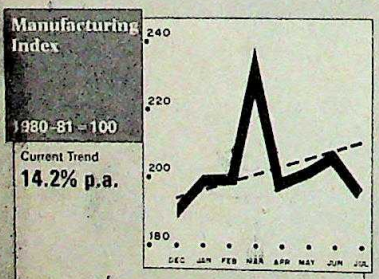
Industrial production fell—the industrial sector needs a major boost if it is to pull up the overall rate of growth.



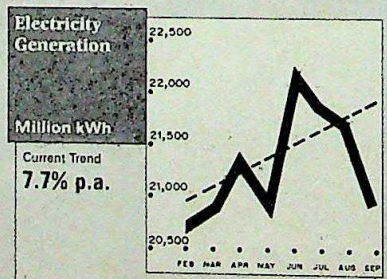
Money supply increased slightly, in the process exacerbating inflationary pressures.



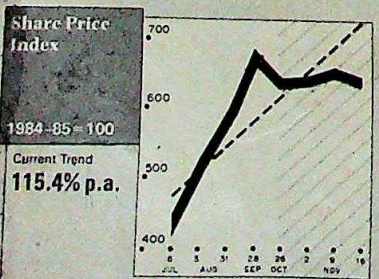
Commercial bank credit contracted. This tendency should be averted before industry is significantly affected.



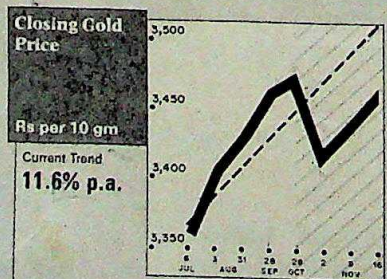
Output of the manufacturing sector fell—this was the major component in the overall slump in industrial output.



Electricity generation has been falling steadily since June mainly due to inefficiency plaguing this key sector.



Share prices fell marginally—the fall could have been much sharper given the political turmoil.



Gold prices picked up—if inflation continues unabated, this could be the beginning of a rising trend.

WHOLESALE PRICES

Growth of items in the 2nd fortnight of October 1990

	% Growth
Petrol	24.54
Furnace Oil	23.83
Diesel Oil	23.80
Kerosene	23.79
Lubricating Oil	20.06
Onions	11.86
Mustard Oilcake	6.85
Masoor	5.38
Mustard Oil	5.09
Polythene Moulding Powder	4.91
Groundnut Seeds	4.68
Linseed Oil	4.62
Turmeric	3.30
Arhar	3.28
Caustic Soda	3.25
Rape & Mustard Seeds	3.18
Linseed	2.81
Ragi	2.79
Chillies	2.72
Soda Ash	2.49
Gingelly Seed	2.30
Tea	2.19
Jute Textiles	1.92
Barley	1.77
Meat	1.71
Eggs	1.70
Cotton Seeds	1.61
Urad	1.41
Vanaspati	1.22
Ghee	1.18
Rice	1.11
Wheat	1.05
Tractors	1.04
Coffee	1.01
Fish	0.97
Sugar	0.92
Solvent Extracted Oil	0.92
Jowar	0.92
Betel-Nuts	0.82
Boilers	0.78
Moong	0.77
Trucks	0.59
Cashew-Nut	0.58
Dairy Products	0.47
Handloom & Powerloom Products	0.38
Art Silk & Artificial Fabrics	0.35
Cotton Cloth	0.32

Of the 134 series considered, 118 of them with a total weight of 65.070 had a non-negative rate of growth and 16 of them with a total weight of 19.782 had a negative rate of growth.

SELECTED INDICATORS

	1990	1989
Coal Thousand Tonnes, September	13790	14700
Saleable Steel Thousand Tonnes, September	736.9	697.8
Cement Thousand Tonnes, September	3515	3462
Fertilisers Thousand Tonnes, September	3981.5	3263.5
Electricity Million kWh, September	20904	20190

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MODERN DAY MOGHULS ARE WELCOMED TO HOLD COURT



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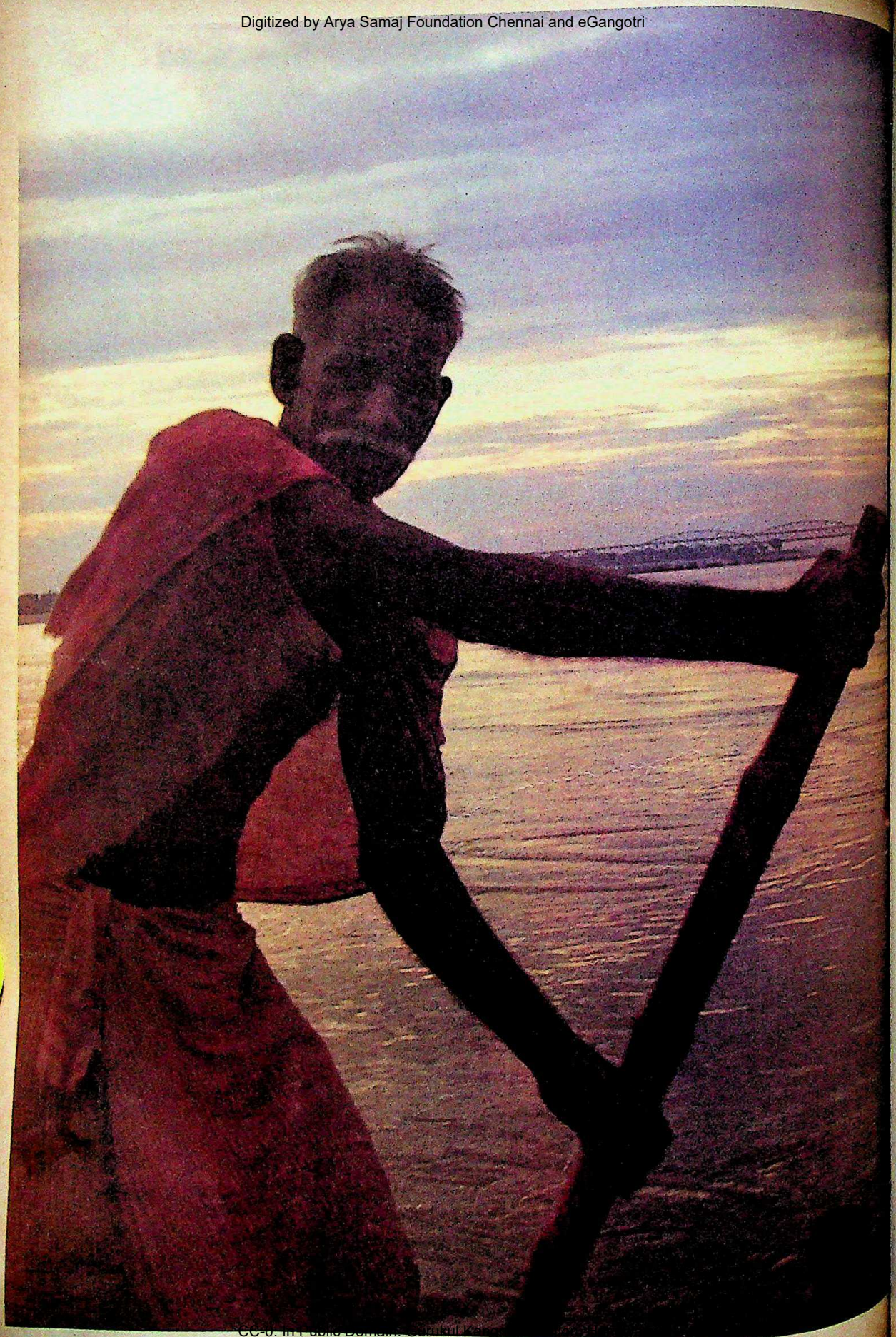
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Uranus II by Sonodyne. It's for the chosen few. It's for you.

The deck alone is a stunner. With pace-setting high-speed and 'Synchro'dubbing facilities. A Dolby Noise Reduction Circuit. And a 6-LED peak reading VU meter for precision recording.

The amplifier delivers a tremendous punch of 400 watts (PMPO). Loudness controls and a special hi-filter eliminate distortion. Logic controlled touch switches allow input selection. And there are mixing facilities — and a microphone input too!

The graphic equaliser allows you to engineer sound to suit the acoustics of your room. The finely balanced, belt-driven turntable makes for prefect tracking. The AM/FM stereo multiplex tuner catches local and overseas broadcasts. And the integrated 3-way, 3-speaker system with a wide-angle dome tweeter produces 400 watts' music power.

Uranus II.

Welcome to the Golden Age in audio engineering.

Uranus II is a totality of SD580 cassette deck, SA580 stereo integrated amplifier, ST500 FM/AM tuner, SQ500 graphic equaliser, SP500 turntable and SX900 speaker system.

SONODYNE Uranus II

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Music has never sounded rich

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KARNATAKA

Playing Policy

● WHILE Karnataka Chief Minister S. Bangarappa may have mastered the game of politics, he still needs to work on his badminton. That's becoming increasingly difficult after coming to power, since his hectic schedule doesn't leave him with time for his daily shuttle practice.

Not that he has stopped altogether. Despite office pressures, Bangarappa, whenever possible, rises early and practices at the state secretariat Employees' Club courts for a couple of hours. And like a true sportsman he shuns all protection.

However, that has its disadvantages. For the chief minister is constantly surrounded by admirers and favour-seekers whom he has to sometimes deal with. Never at the cost of his game, though. He remains dedi-

Bangarappa: not quite tops



cated. Playing with everyone from clerks to industrialists.

And the game certainly brings out the best in the normally reserved chief minister. He undergoes a dramatic transformation on court, as he often breaks into exultant shouts. Ace politician though he may be, he has yet to prove his mettle in the game which is described as average by his partners.

ANDHRA PRADESH

An Unusual Endeavour



Still from *Komrani Bheem*: creditable venture

● FOR years the Gond tribals were confined to the wilds of Andhra Pradesh. But now the spotlight is on them as the Integrated Tribal Development Agency (ITDA) and documentary film maker Allani Sridhar are making a film on the Gond hero, Komaram Bheem.

Bheem is remembered for having rebelled against the oppression of the former Hyderabad rulers. Legend has it that like his mythological counterpart, he too had an impenetrable chest. The ITDA plans to make 16 mm copies also so that it can be shown in the interior areas.

BIHAR

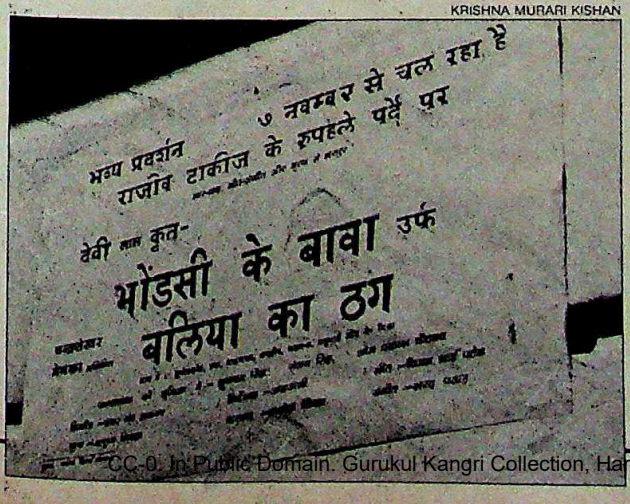
Cast for the Times

● LAST month, as the political drama at the Centre reached its denouement, the walls of Patna city were plastered with posters proclaiming an exciting new release complete with pulse-racing action.

According to the posters there was a "grand show running since November 7 on the silver screen of Rajiv Talkies"—a Devi Lal Production titled *Bhondsi ka Baba urf Ballia ka Thug*. Starring Chandra Shekhar and Maneka Gandhi, its screenplay written by M.J. Akbar, direction by L.K. Advani and lyrics by Chimanbhai Patel. While Shatrughan Sinha directed the dances, Ashok Singhal was the fights director.

A spoof poster: lampooning going-on

KRISHNA MURARI KISHAN



MADHYA PRADESH

Righting Oneself

● THE pen may just prove to be mightier than the sword, or rather the gun—that is, if former bandit queen Phoolan Devi has her way. For after surrendering her arms in a much-publicised ceremony back in 1983, Phoolan is now dabbling in something quite different from banditry: she is finally learning how to read and write within the confines of Gwalior Jail where she is lodged.

PRASHANT PANJIAR



Phoolan: new ambitions

How did the dramatic turnaround take place? Apparently, when the director-general (prisons) visited Gwalior Jail two months ago, the former Chambal outlaw expressed her fervent desire to receive an education. Given Phoolan's track record at turning over a new leaf, the director-general quickly obliged. He then proceeded to depute two female wardens for the job. The result: in her new avatar Phoolan can now write her name clearly.

Phoolan, it seems, had always been fascinated by the idea of being able to read and write. And, in fact, she had always harboured ambitions of being able to earn a living by doing that. Rumour has it that she had once even offered to swap jobs with a journalist who was interviewing her.

Maybe now that she can put pen to paper she can finally get to indulge her fantasies. Some day.

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BIHAR

Language Lows

Politicians are spawning an abusive culture

VANDALISM is nothing new in Bihar. Except, this time, the victim is language and the vandals are politicians and their followers. With the advent of the irrepressible Laloo Prasad Yadav as chief minister—and the Mandal imbroglio—a new political lexicon is emerging which follows Gresham's law: good words are being driven out by the vile. Inevitably, the violence in the political arena has found its filthy correlative in language.

Yadav has simplified executive orders to the street-fighter's expression of *"sab ko theek kardenge"* (we'll fix everyone). And his response to the anti-Mandal protestors on September 4 was the peremptory Napoleonic one of *"Dekhte kya hon, bomb phekon aur bhoon dalo saalon ko"* (What are you waiting for? Lob the bombs and mow down the rogues).

Another favourite (filthy) buzzword in vogue among Bihar's legislators and ministers is *baans kar denge* (push the bamboo up), which is a lumpen substitute for 'Get it done, or....' Says Prabhat Kumar Sinha of Patna's Sunday Club, a discussion group: "Whenever you hear somebody using filthy phrases you know it is the new breed of politician."

The anti-reservation agitators, led by forward caste Congress(I) leaders, have contributed in no small measure to the current debasement of political speech. A provocative slogan was *"Laloo saala mat chillao, ghar mein jakar bachcha janmao"* (Laloo rascal don't crow; go home and beget a child). An insidious reference to the chief minister's large family of nine children. That, of course, is a milder example of the new political language. Most of it is unprintable, but certainly not unsayable. The common method of castigating political rivals is to insult their women, mostly the mothers. This in a land where motherhood is placed on a sanctified pedestal. The covert male chauvinism has now spilled over into Bihar's turbulent political arena. It is more common to add the suffix *sala* to names than the traditional *ji*.

The new gutter language has evoked a mixed reponse. Bihar Assembly Speaker Alhaj Ghulam Sarwar, who is also an eminent Urdu editor, actually defends the new abusive language by saying: "Society is undergoing a change for the better and in the long run people's language and behaviour too would change." And Sarwar practises what he defends. A repartee of his in the mode of the new free expression in the House is: *"Mananiya sadasya* point-of-order *ke* privilege *ke saath* mass rape *kar rahein hein"* (The honourable member is committing mass rape with the point-of-order).

Professor Jabir Hussain, an associate of Jayaprakash Narayan, believes that politicians have resorted to such language to demoralise bureaucrats who have rational arguments on their side. Inder Kumar, a legislator of 24 years standing, agrees and says that the new political language began as a means to terrorise opponents and the bureaucracy. He recalls that 10 years ago young legislators of the Janata Party used to storm officers' chambers and rain abuses on them. That was their way of getting things done. Ten years later, the linguistic terror is being perfected, he says.

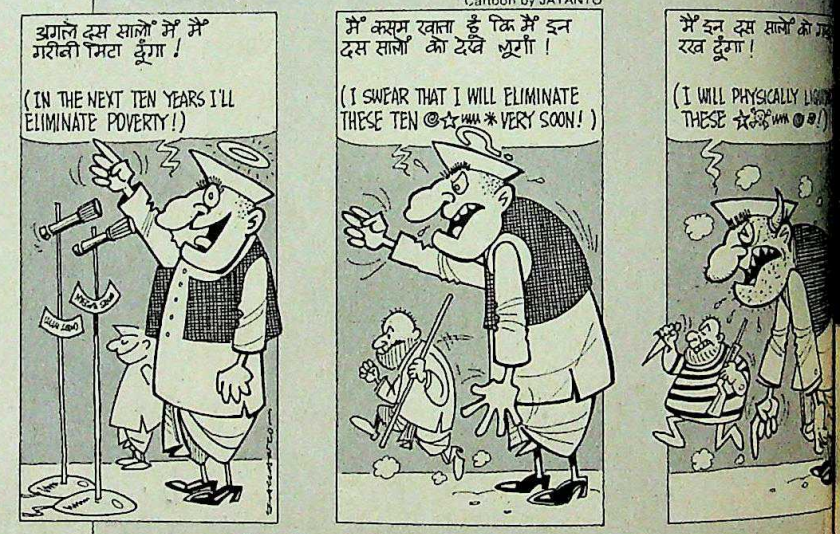
Though not confined to Janata Party and Janata Dal politicians, there is no denying that more politicians are showing their true colours—mostly blue—in the kind of abusive language being employed.

Comments an IAS officer: "You like it or hate it, but it is only through the use of abusive language that Laloo Yadav seems to have minimised crime, corruption and communal violence." Strange logic which seems to fit in with the bizarre politics of Bihar.

In many ways, the debasement was inevitable—Laloo or no Laloo. Initially, politicians were mostly from the educated middle class and intellectually inclined. The perceptible change in the quality of the political leaders occurred in the '70s. The new political recruits were from the underclass of hoodlums. The party managers of the '50s and the '60s were replaced by party musclemen who emerged along with the late Sanjay Gandhi during the Emergency. Many of them now occupy positions of power in all the political parties. For them, the best form of communication is the crudest. And for anybody who argues, there is only one standard answer: *Baans kar denge.*

—FARZAND AHMED in Patna

Cartoon by JAYANTO



More politicians are showing their true colours—mostly blue—in the kind of abusive language being employed by them.

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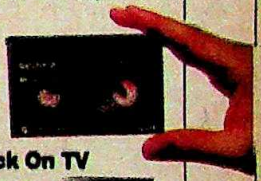
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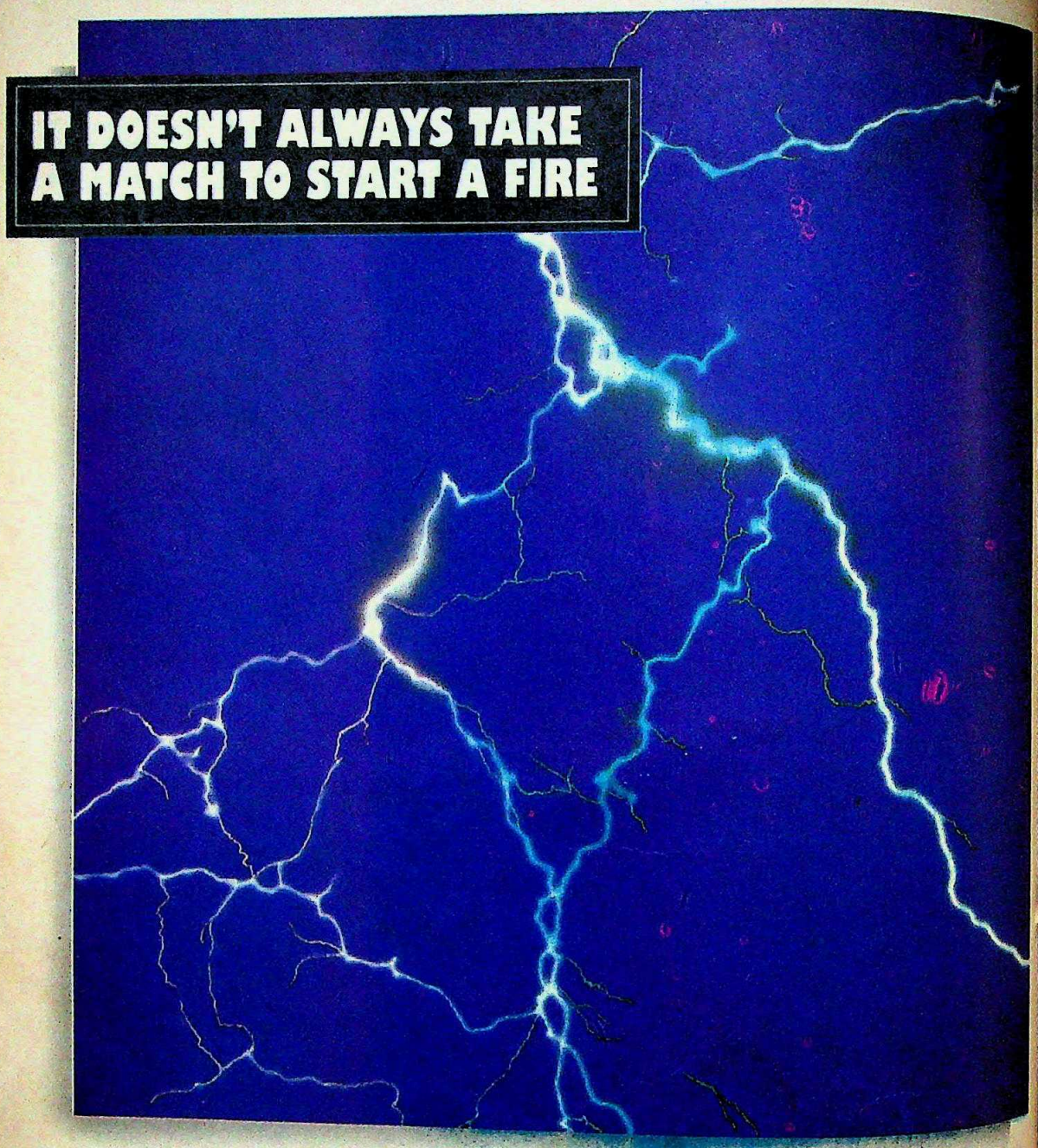
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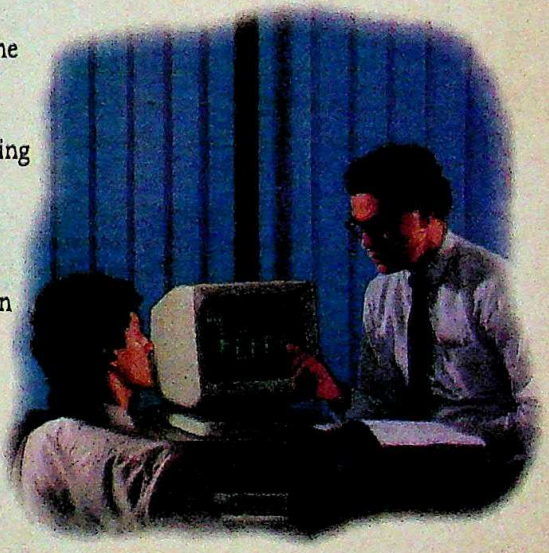
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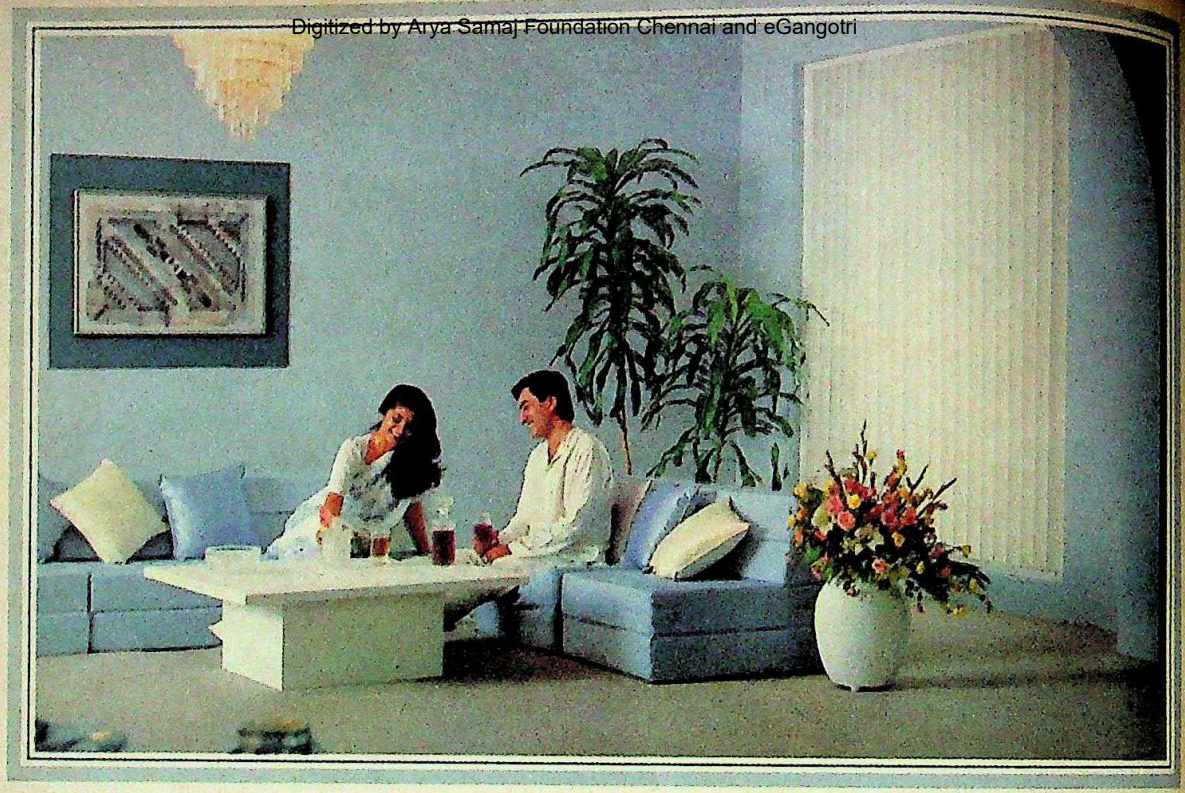
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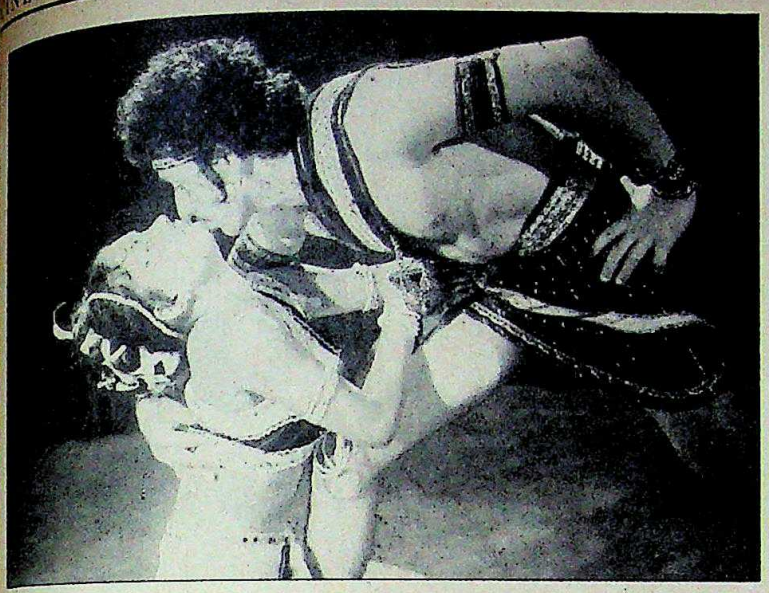
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ORIYA FILMS

Sleaze Story

Big boom in masala films

▸ *THE nubile heroine steals up the stairs of the villain's haveli and hacks him to pieces with a chopper.*

▸ *The gangster's moll does a mean striptease. Rhythmically following her gyrating hips, the hero, suddenly possessed by Sylvester Stallone's spirit, throws a volley of even meaner punches at the mob.*

▸ *The comedian plays with two watermelons and at the same time ogles at a buxom vegetable vendor. Double entendres of the Dada Kondke variety flow as the camera lasciviously scans her heaving curves.*

STANDARD masala fare from Bombay's Bollywood? Not quite. The three scenes are all from recently released Oriya films and symbolise the stark truth about regional cinema—busts or bust. Sex and special effects, gore and glamour, it's all coming together in Oriya films—as are the hordes of cinema fans—symbolising an unprecedented boom in moribund Oriya cinema.

"The boom is finally here," exults Sampat Mohapatra, editor of the film weekly *Cine Sambad* published from Bhubaneswar. "Oriya films have taken a quantitative jump forward," asserts D.K. Mishra, managing director of the Orissa Film Development Corporation (OFDC), which unlike the parent National Film Development Corporation, has financed only commercial ventures.



Scenes from *Sabu Mayare Bayya*: overdose of sex and violence

The results are obvious everywhere. Till 1976, only two to three Oriya movies were made in a year, this year eight films have already been released and six more are ready to hit the screen. For 1991, 15 films are on the floor and 11 more productions have been announced.

Six years ago, a hit film could only at the most gross Rs 6-7 lakh, today the average is Rs 26-27 lakh and last year's big hit *Chaka Akhi Sabu Dekhuchi* totalled Rs 35 lakh at the box-office.

Statistics on the total turnover of the Oriya film industry are unavailable and may be minuscule as compared to the megabucks in Hindi, Tamil and Telugu films. But the only just comparison that can be made is with the past. The first Oriya film, *Sita Bibaha*, was made in 1934. Fifteen years had to elapse before the next film, *Lalita*, could see the light of day. The breakthrough came about 1977 with *Mamata* by Okesh Tripathy, a radical departure from the sobriety of standard Oriya films. The seeds were sown. The first to respond and reap the harvest is Prasantha Nanda. A master mixer of thrills and frills and lavish productions, his *Ja Debi Sarvabhutesu* is the most expensive (Rs 40 lakh) Oriya movie ever made. It turned out to be a super-hit and is headed towards a silver jubilee run. Soon other producers, aping the Bombay masala film formula, emerged. People like Raju Mishra and Amiya Patnaik and a host of others. The fact that industrialist A.A. Sirsmith has switched to films is a clear indication that Oriya cinema is finally a viable commercial proposition, even though the quality of films may have deteriorated.

The boom has already ensured a star system. The first lady of Oriya cinema is Mahasweta. In her early 30s, she charges about Rs 60,000 for a film. The established male stars are Uttam Mohanty, Bijoy Mohanty and Sriram Panda. Oriya cinema's hottest property, however, is actor-producer-director Prasantha Nanda, who commands Rs 2 lakh.

The other significant spin-off is that Oriya cinema is no longer an isolated island. Producers are bringing in talent from elsewhere—stuntmen from Bombay, dance directors from Madras and sexy starlets from Hyderabad.

The strategy has worked. Currently, three out of the six movie houses in the state capital are running Oriya films. There were just 25-odd theatres in the state in the '50s; the number is over 256 today. Adding to the success formula is the fact that many producers are making Oriya-Bengali bilinguals.

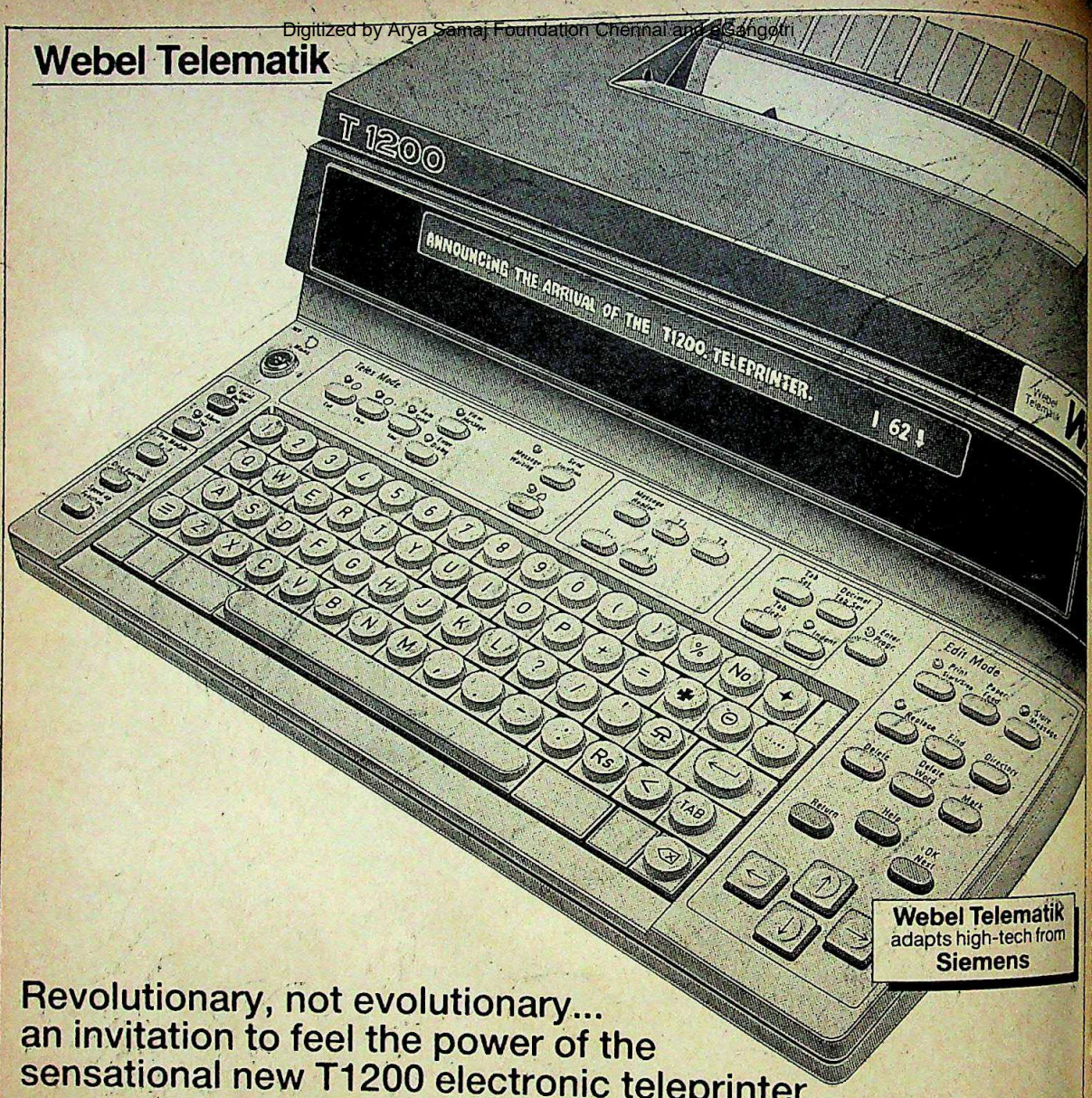
Amidst this euphoria and frenzied activity, not many tears are being shed on the quality of cinema. The critics put the blame on the money-spinners which cater to and inculcate a taste for the prurient and the profane, and on the OFDC which has spent Rs 5 crore so far—all on pot-boilers. "The industry has been hijacked by profiteers," bemoans Parvati Ghosh, a more conservative film maker. To which Nanda's retort is: "We are not in charity. Ours after all is a business." Quite.

—RUBEN BANERJEE in Bhubaneswar

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CHANDIGARH

A Dream Gone Sour

India's model city is threatening to become an urban nightmare

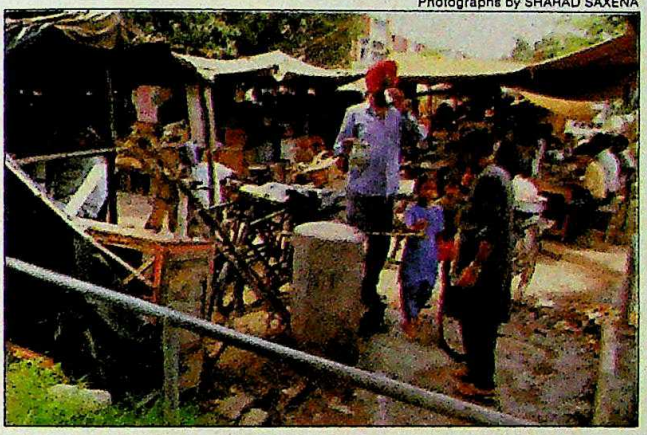
By KANWAR SANDHU

"LET this be a new town, symbolic of the freedom of India, unfettered by the traditions of the past...an expression of the nation's faith in the future."
—Jawaharlal Nehru in 1952

THE venerable Le Corbusier didn't, obviously, plan Chandigarh, his City Beautiful, so that it would go to pot within four decades of its inception. It was a city driven by dreams of becoming, in time, a metropolis that would rival the might of other major cities with a polish and persuasive charm of its own.

The polish and the charm are still there but the veneer is beginning to crack. Chandigarh, constructed with geometric precision for a maximum population of 500,000, is already host to over 700,000, and is unravelling rapidly at the seams. At least 10 per cent of the population lives in the four villages and half a dozen slums that pockmark the city. They are in no way daunted by the fact that over the past four years the administration has razed at least 20 slums and shifted their inhabitants to the city's periphery.

Photographs by SHARAD SAXENA



The city's masterplan has crumbled under the burden of thousands of refugees every year.

But then putting all the blame for the city's demographic desecration on slum dwellers alone is unfair. Many of them, desperate, shellshocked spillovers from terrorism in Punjab over the last six years and from Jammu & Kashmir, had little choice

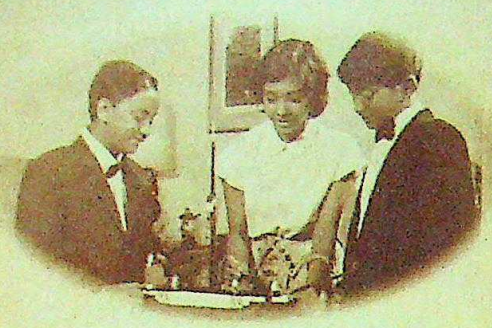


At least 10 per cent of the population lives in the four villages—Badheri, Attawa, Burail and Buterla—and many slums that pockmark the city and stick out like sore thumbs.

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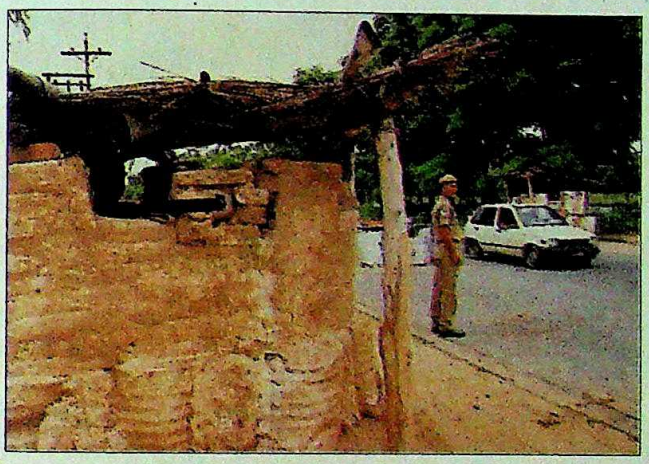
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but to head towards Chandigarh's relative serenity in the face of growing truculence in Punjab and Haryana.

Some of the refugees came dead broke and settled in the slums but a substantial number came loaded enough to give a boost to the fledgling real estate market that is, with its condominiums, in the throes of making a mess of Chandigarh's skyline. Add to that the fact that the taller a building the less precious horizontal space it will occupy and you have the formula for a first class degree in real estate monetary greed.

A part of the city's problems can be traced to the crisis of identity that has dogged it since the reorganisation of Punjab in 1966. Carefully crafted plans have, over years of political uncertainty, been abandoned or been lost under mounds of fresh plans, few of them implemented. The city's master plan, which was to have been realised in two phases, has crumbled under the onslaught of emigres and refugees who settle in the city in thousands every year. The administration has, in fact, already jabbed the panic button but evidently doesn't know how to turn the clock back to a more organised past.

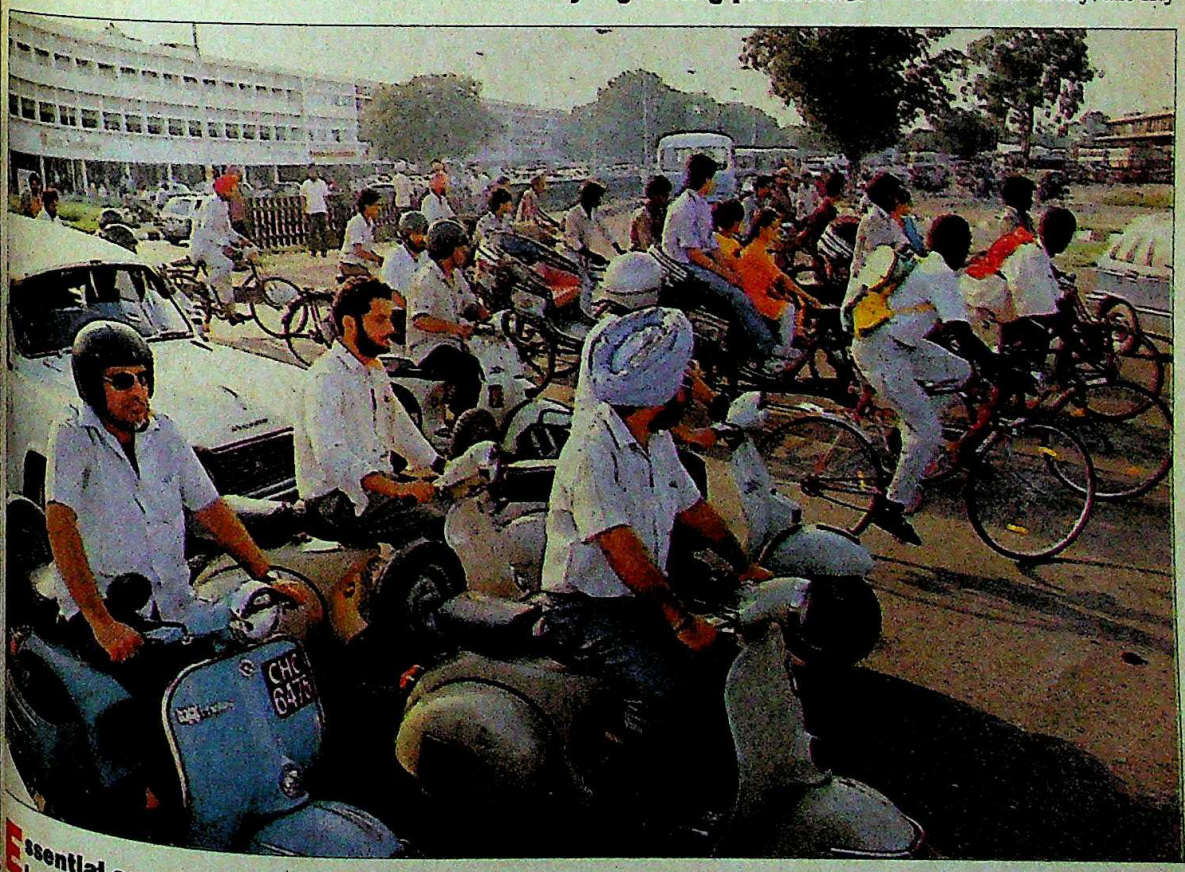


Terrorism has added another intractable dimension to the city's growing problems.

Last year, for instance, for the 1,608 houses advertised by the Chandigarh Housing Board, there were as many as 21,000 applicants. To meet the demand, the administration of this union territory has resorted to increased density of units per acre—40 now against 12 units in phase I. "We have no option," says the city's chief architect, O.P. Mehta, "since there is not even an acre of free land available."

OVER 100 private schools have applied to the administration for land to build upon. Scores of cooperative housing societies remain in limbo after having got themselves registered. Up to its knees in a mire of its own creation, the administration now proposes to hijack 1,800 acres of land adjoining the two townships of Mohali and Panchkula, thus grabbing land that was meant to be a verdant buffer zone. Says Mehta: "We will use it for low density population institutions". But environmentalists see this as the beginning of measures to choke the city's lungs.

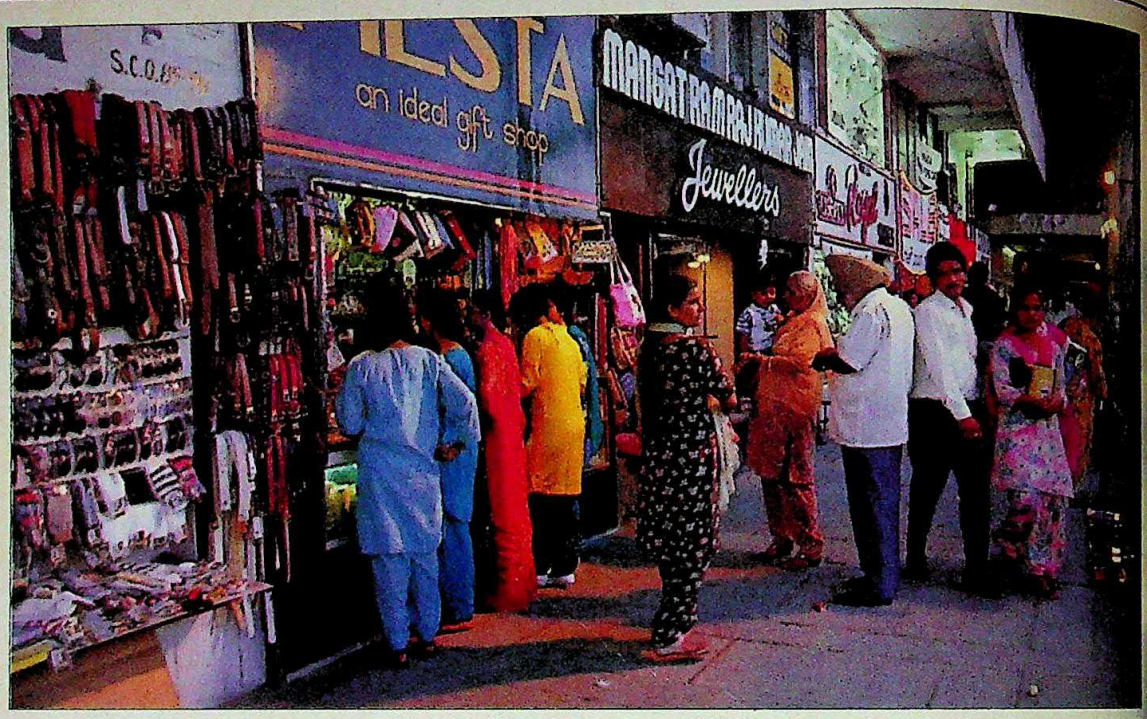
Without such breathing space, Chandigarh could well turn into an urban devils' playground. As it stands today, the city



Essential services are on the brink of collapse. Poor infrastructural facilities have lead to over-congestion and traffic snarl-ups have begun to cripple the city.

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Real estate prices have shot up, out of the reach of the middle class. A 500 sq mt plot fetched Rs 20 lakh and a shop in Sector 17 is rented for Rs 45,000 per month.

presents a contradiction of sorts—an unnerving mix of modernity and primitivism. The four villages within the city premises—Badheri, Attawa, Burail and Buterla—stick out like sore thumbs.

As it is, the city is groaning under the weight of essential services running themselves to the ground. "We are already at breaking point," says Chandigarh's Chief Engineer, S.S. Virdi. It's a thirsty city. Against the demand for 80 million gallons of water per day, only 50 million gallons are tubed in, mainly from its 85 tubewells and the Bhakra Canal. For reasons best known to itself, the Government has shied away from building a dam across the Ghaghar river that flows close by. Other services, too, are on the brink of collapsing: even temporary telephone connections are almost impossible to get, thus hiking up premiums to a high of Rs 40,000 per connection.

The development of Mohali and Panchkula by Punjab and Haryana respectively, without paying much heed to infrastructural facilities, is slowly throttling Chandigarh. The two states have flouted with impunity the provisions of the Punjab New Capital (Periphery) Control Act, 1952, which was sagely enacted to control development within 10 miles of Chandigarh. A committee appointed by the Union Government to regulate development on the periphery of the city was subsequently emasculated. Any-which-way-you-can construction threatens to pour over onto even the fragile green belt behind the Sukhna lake.

The lake itself has become the centre of a controversy between two hard-nosed groups: the anti-boating, pro-avian environmentalists and the pro-boating water sports enthusiasts. The lake is the only stretch of water in the country where water sport facilities are of international standards—a 2,200-metre, six lane, straight and virtually flat surface, ideal for rowing competitions. Last year, matters came to a head and the lake was declared a "wetland" to prevent "biotic interference".

Says S.K. Sharma, founder secretary of the Environment Society of Chandigarh, "Due to a quantum increase in boating activity on the lake, the number of migratory birds dropped drastically." Former Lake Club supervisor, Kailash Nath, differs: "It's a tragedy that water sports built up so assiduously will wither away." Adds Raman Kalia, a city rower, "The controversy is unfortunate and unnecessary. Water sports and birds have co-existed for years without any problems."

REAL estate prices have shot up, sometimes out of the reach of the middle class. In February last, the Chandigarh administration sold a 500 sq mt residential plot in a new sector for Rs 20 lakh. A builtup shop (2,200 sq ft area) in Sector 17 fetched a rental of Rs 45,000 per month. While the administration has tightened its loop, there is a built-in escape route: a number of private firms have been advertising 500 sq mt farmhouses for Rs 20,000 each. The catch? The rigmarole is being played out 25 km from the city's boundaries, in the far more lenient Haryana.

The Chandigarh administration has been trying to come to grips with the situation. In order to ease traffic snarls near the Inter-State Bus Stand, it is constructing an 80-metre underground subway which will be flanked by shops. At the same time, it pretends to look the other way when asked why it doesn't utilise large tracts of land that were once given away by the simple largesse of political patronage and which have been lying fallow. The administration has yet to exercise its demolition rights over 100-odd "places of worship" that have come up illegally.

But then this is Chandigarh: as proudly ethnocentric as it is cosmopolitan. Combining the two, however, has left it rudderless, without a signpost to show it which way to go: towards modernism—often crass—or babu conservatism. Meanwhile the dream of this city, set in the foothills of the Shivalik range, is slowly turning sour.

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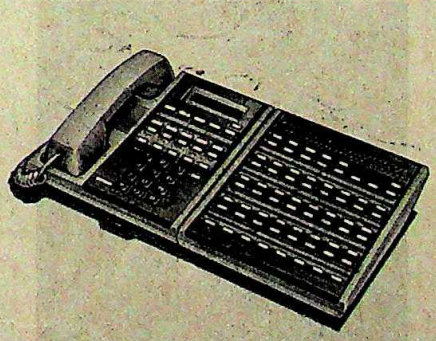
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15 years	50	28 years	172
16 years	56	29 years	186
17 years	62	30 years	200
18 years	68	31 years	215
19 years	74	32 years	230
20 years	80	33 years	245
21 years	90	34 years	260
22 years	100	35 years	275
23 years	110	36 years	290
24 years	120	37 years	305
25 years	130	38 years	320
26 years	144	39 years	335
		40 years and above	350

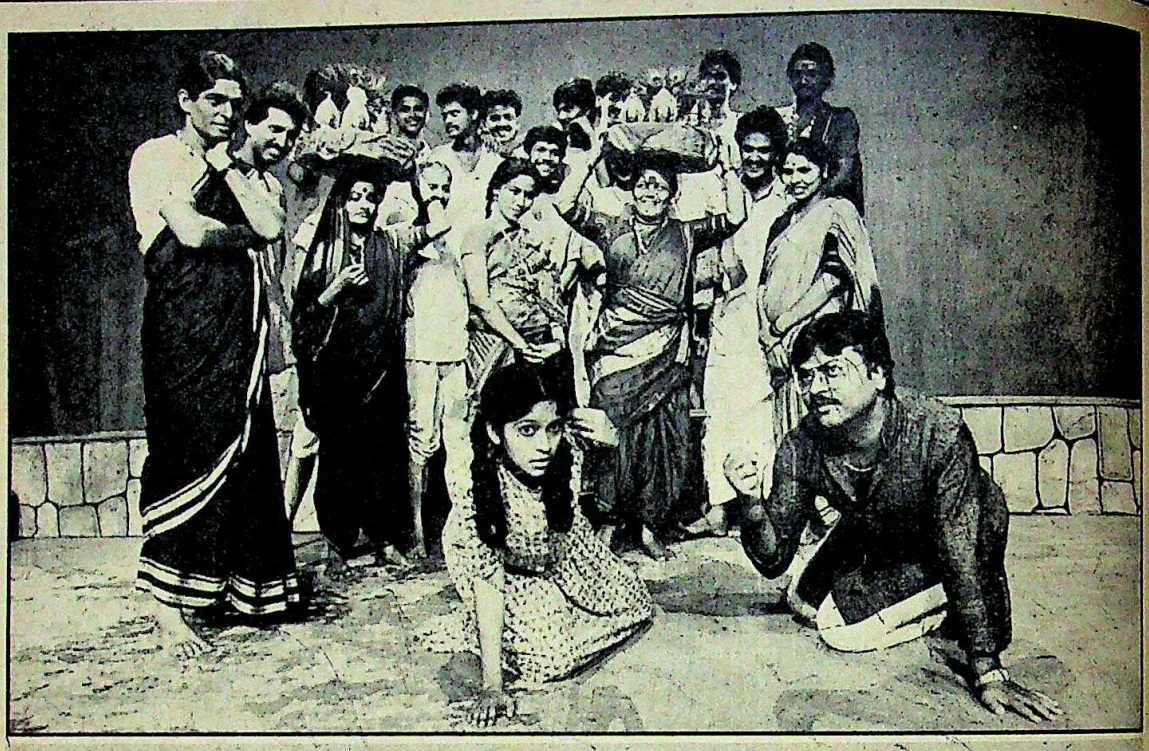
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Waman Kendre (right) directing the star cast for the powerful play *Zulwa*: dissecting social practices

MARATHI THEATRE

Comeback Act

Full houses and a new vibrancy

ONLY three years ago, Marathi theatre appeared to be on the mat. Unable to successfully meet the joint onslaught of big-budget television and block-buster cinema it seemed to have crumbled altogether.

But now, after a period of lying low, Marathi theatre, particularly in Bombay and Pune, has stirred to life once again. Sloughing off its languorous phase, it has suddenly acquired a new vibrancy. The revival is attested by the packed houses at auditoria which so far were usually associated with commercial theatre. New plays are being written. The lure of television has spawned a whole new generation of performers for stage. What's more, even weekday matinee shows are running to full houses.

And if there's a new bounce in the steps of Marathi theatre, the most sprightly of the new lot is director Waman Kendre. Born in Daradwadi, a small village in Maharashtra's dusty Beed district, Kendre went to the National School of Drama and then studied folk theatre in Kerala. He came to Bombay, worked with the Indian People's Theatre Association and then directed *Zulwa* (Devadasi's marriage ceremony with an idol of god), a powerful play based on Uttam Tupe's novel, about the despicable Devadasi system still practised in parts of Maharashtra and Karnataka. Kendre hasn't looked back since then and walked away with all the three prizes for plays at the state awards last year—for *Natigoti* (blood relations), *Ek Zunj Varyashi* (one battle with the wind), and *Doosara Saamna* (second confrontation). Of the 35 possible awards, Kendre's plays got 27. About *Zulwa*, Kendre says: "Dozens of people tell me they have seen it at least 10 times."

Indeed, people are beginning to troop back to the theatres. Says veteran playwright P.L. Deshpande: "The thread of love for theatre is woven into the very texture of Maharashtra." In a state with a strong tradition in theatre—where nationalistic leaders like Tilak were known patrons of theatre, and many social reformers used plays to float revolutionary ideas—*Zulwa* has signalled the return of earnestness in theatre.

If Kendre has been directing path-breaking plays, writing some of the better plays is Nagpur-based Mahesh Elkunchwar. His *Wada Chirebandi* (strong mansion indicating wealth of the person living in it) marvellously recreated the plight of an unmarried sister in a small town, with Vijaya Mehta playing a stellar role. His more recent play, *Atmakatha* (autobiography), has been equally successful, in which Shreeram Lagoo acts as an aging author. Last fortnight, Lagoo staged his new major production, *Chanakya Vishnugupt*.

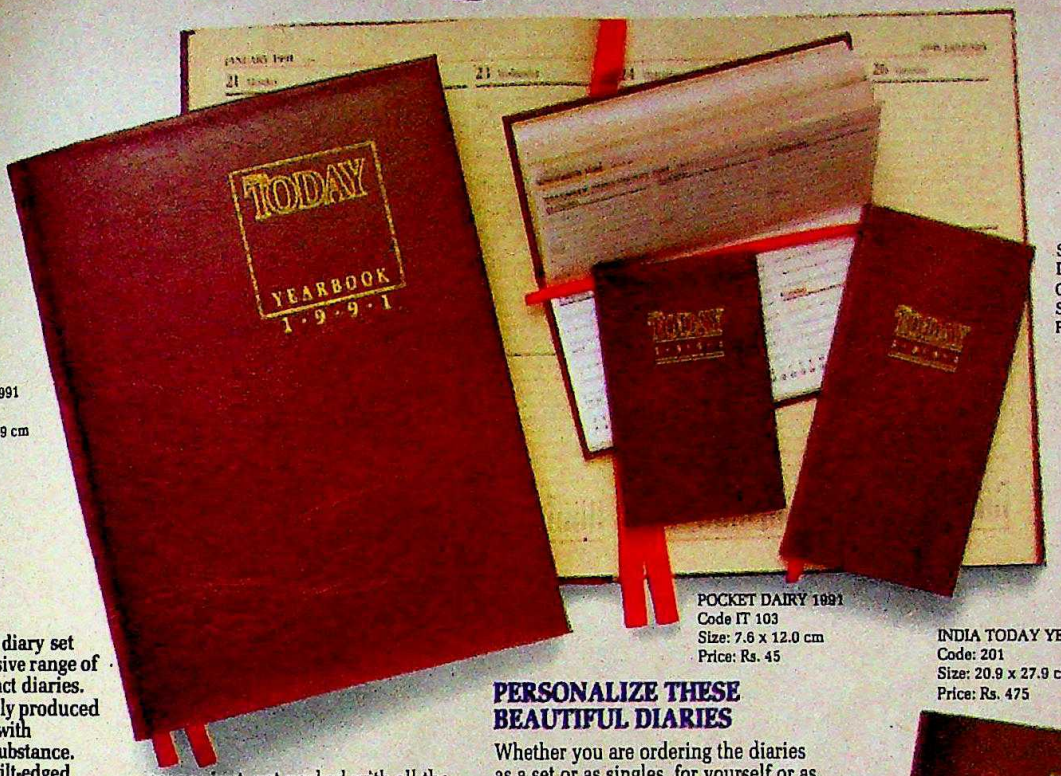
Not that these are the only ones to have been bitten by the serious theatre bug. In a surprising about-turn, P.L. Deshpande, renowned for humour, has adapted Vladlen Dozortsev's *The Last Appointment*, an evocative critique of the heartlessness of a cynical politician. The play, *Ek Zunj Varyashi*—which has had 80 shows already—centres around an earnest samaritan who has the gall to step into the august ministerial chamber and hold the politician accountable for driving a journalist to dipsomania. Other acclaimed productions include Shanta Gokhale's *Avinash* (indestructible) and Rajiv Naik's *Sandha* (joint), which effectively explores the form of theatre with an interactive *sutradhar*.

Clearly, the intrusion of television hasn't been altogether fatal to serious theatre. In fact, it could be even argued

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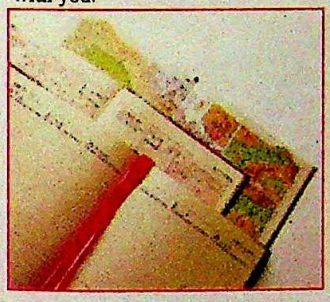
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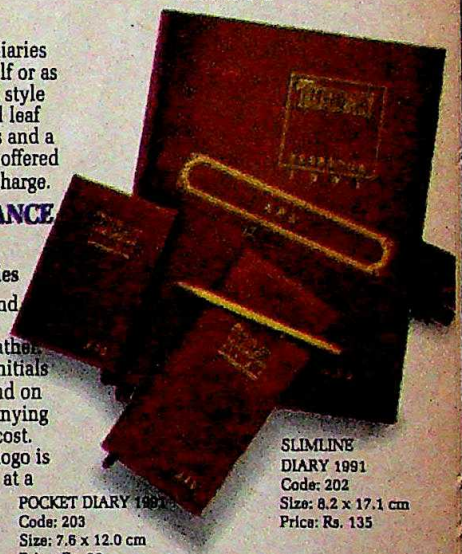
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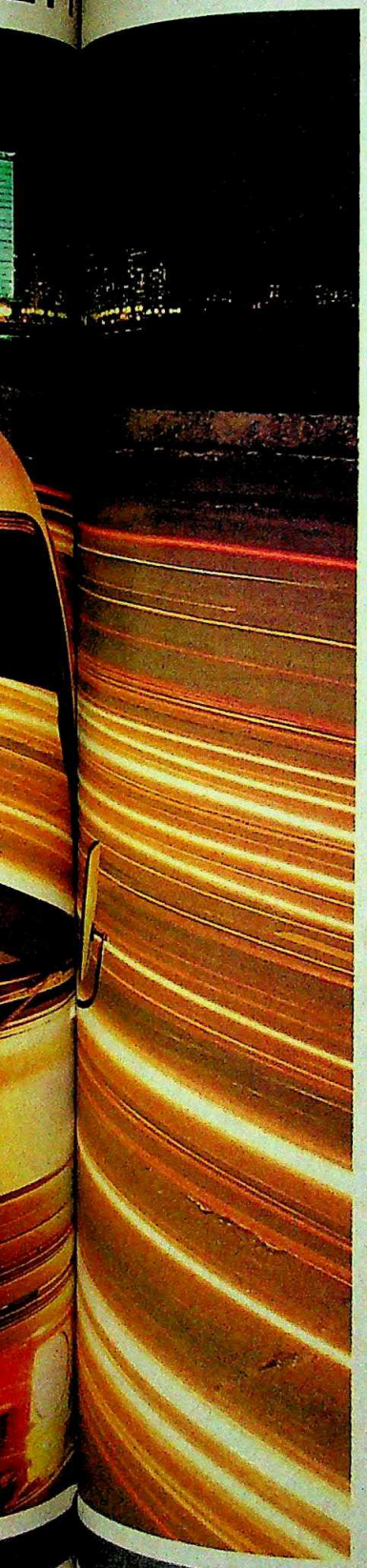


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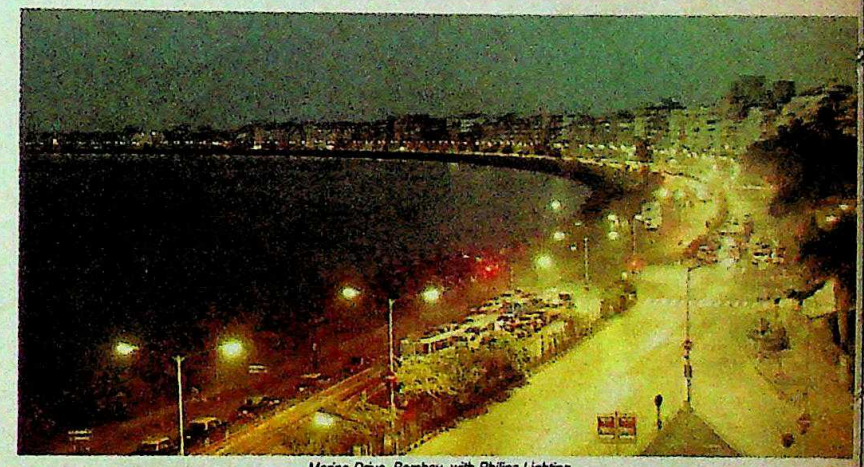
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that TV wasn't an antagonist but it played a collaborative role particularly through programmes like *Natyavalo Bhet*—a talk show where a new play is discussed with critics, the playwright, the director and a few actors.

Meanwhile, Pune's Theatre Academy has not been resting on its laurels: its *Ghasiram Kotwal*, which has had a 17-year-old reign, created a record of sorts for non-subsidised amateur theatre last year by completing 500 shows. It also embarked on an ambitious three-year project to unearth new playwrights, funded by the Ford Foundation. As a result of the exercise some of the major playwrights discovered have been Ajit Dalvi, Prashant Dalvi, Arvind Vishwanath, Premanand Gajvi, Vinod Hadap and Shafat Khan. Says playwright Satish Alekar, the Academy's co-ordinator, whose latest play *Atirekee* (extremist) has gained a large following: "Our aim is to create an establishment so that we're free to pursue our creative endeavours."

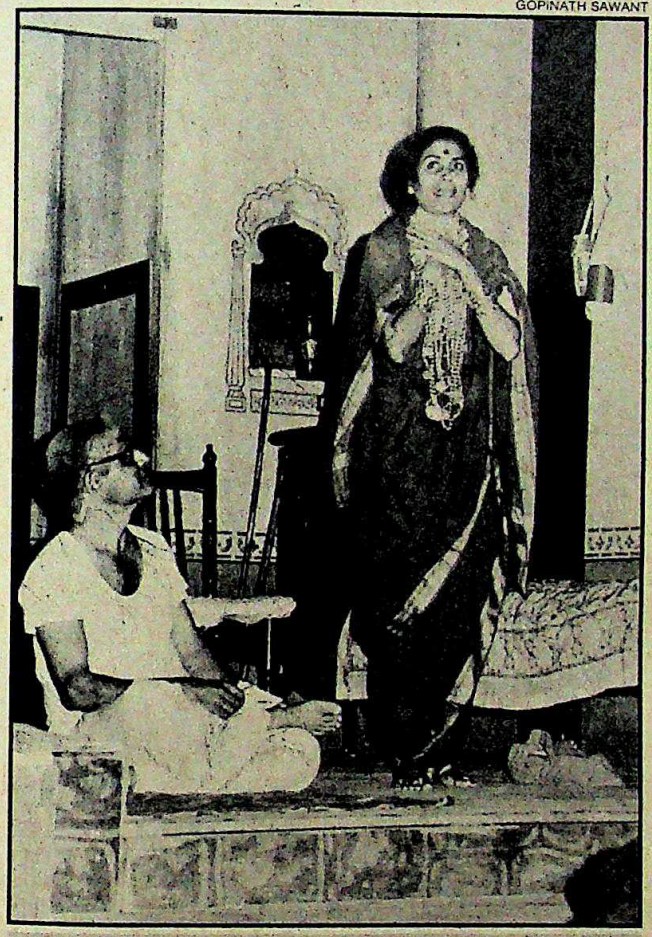
And in order to further pump creative efforts, the Ford Foundation scheme has enabled the Academy to undertake the Playwright Development Scheme, award domestic travel fellowships, international travel grants, create a library, and acquire video equipment. The Playwright Development Scheme yielded impressive plays like *Shatakhand* (the hundredth volume), *Karan* (an Adivasi word), *Bhumiti cha Faarce* (the farce of geometry), *Vata Palvata* (with escapism), *Post-mortem*, *Abhedya* (indestructible), *Avashesh* (remains) and *Charshe koti Visarbhole* (four hundred crore absent-minded).

Not that the other activities of the Academy took a back-seat. The Academy went beyond *Ghasiram Kotwal*, to present plays like *Mahanirvan* (the great salvation), *Abda Abda* (nonsense words), *Begum Barve*, *Shanivar Ravivar* (Saturday, Sunday), *Padgham* (drum) and now *Atirekee*.

Critics, who had criticised the abstract tradition of the '70s on the ground that it didn't relate to the Indian reality, have been vindicated by the revival of the new wave and its simple narrative styles. According to Kendre: "To make a play heavy and complex is simple, but to make a play simple and justify it is a very difficult job. Absurd plays have damaged experimental theatre."

However, one real problem faced by Marathi theatre is that it does not enjoy the access to publicity, sponsorship and advertising that English theatre does. Despite the present successes, revenue is low: the highest priced ticket in a Marathi play is still Rs 20, a fifth of an English play's ticket, so as to make it accessible to the average Wagle-like person.

GOPINATH SAWANT



A scene from *Wada Chirebandi*: superb production

LIFE for a Marathi actor is hard, and theatre remains a labour of love. After a hard day's slog, he has to muster the energy to go to an ill-lit suburban school hall, practise for a few hours, and then return home by midnight. Says Theatre Academy's Mohan Agashe: "There is urgent need to consider subsidy for theatre on the lines of British subsidies for serious work."

Despite the problems, Marathi theatre has come a long way from 1987—the year Arwind Deshpande, noted actor-director died and it seemed as if an essential part of Marathi theatre died. For Arwind Deshpande, with his wife Sulabha and their group, Awishkar, was the moving spirit behind the Chhabildas Revolution of the '70s, when new drama flourished and experimental plays were written at the Chhabildas School in mid-town Bombay; plays like *Changuna* (name of a person, based on Lorca's Yerma), *Antigone*, Achyut Vaze's *Sofa-cum-Bed*, Amol Palekar's *Chal Re Bhoplya Tunuk Tunuk* (come Bhopaya, tunuk tunuk) and *Juloos* (procession) were the rage. Deshpande's death came at a time when theatre attendances were waning, despite occasional masterpieces such as Shreeram Lagoo's and *Uddhwastha Dharmashala* (devastated inn) Mahesh Elkunchwar's *Raktabeej* (the seed of blood). Says theatre critic Mukta Rajadhyaksha: "The complete lull in the latter half of the '80s was real."

Also, in the early '80s theatre seemed to have been pushed along the edge by TV serials like *Ek Shunya Shunya* (100—the dialing code to call the police). The *enfant terribles* of the first wave of experimentation like the Palekars had moved on to television or cinema, or had given up theatre. Vijaya Mehta began making films after staging Elkunchwar's *Wada Chirebandi*, and even Vijay Tendulkar was writing film-scripts. Says P.L. Deshpande, director of the NCPA: "They were not drawn by TV, they were sucked."

But all that is a thing of the past now. Marathi theatre is back on the front burner. And with the Ford Foundation grants and NCPA's lead, the first steps towards professionalising and integrating theatre activities have already begun. Much more is needed; but so long as audiences continue to support serious efforts, the future of Marathi theatre will remain rosy.

—SALIL TRIPATHI

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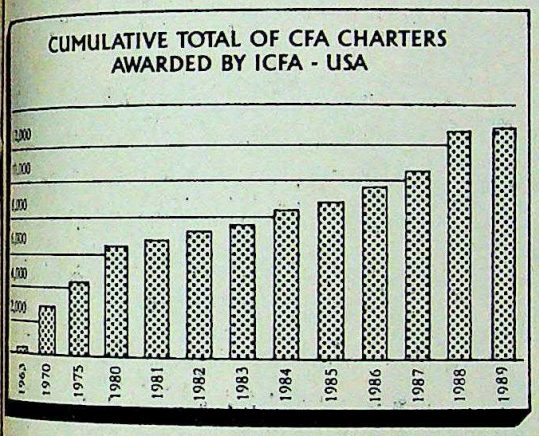
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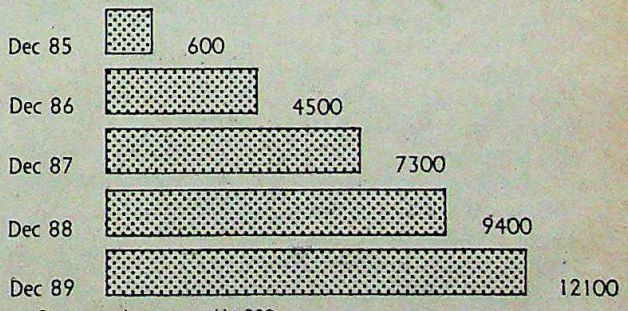
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DANCE

Classical Kitsch

Ravi Shankar's ballet, *Ghanshyam*, fails to impress

MISSED your ticket to the matinee? Never mind. Try a bit of classical kitsch for a change. On a platter from no less a personage than the sitar maestro Pandit Ravi Shankar. *Ghanshyam* (a broken branch), a ballet, "conceived and composed" by Ravi Shankar, is the celebrated musician's latest 'baby', as he calls it. Commissioned by The City of Birmingham's Touring Opera, the production danced its way through theatres in the United Kingdom to packed houses and rave reviews. And now he's brought his baby home.

The production opened to Indian audiences at a poorly attended premiere in Madras, represented mostly by the elite who nevertheless made all the right appreciative noises, and even gave him a standing ovation. In the next two months the show moves to Bombay, Calcutta and Delhi.

Ghanshyam's theme is contemporary—the story of a Kathak dancer who falls prey to the heady intoxication of charas and degenerates from a talented artiste and loving husband to a base addict thieving to maintain his addiction and lusting for his neighbour's wife.

Shankar had originally intended to use an epic theme but was persuaded by the Birmingham company to employ a more contemporary one. And so he plunged headlong into the heady contemporaneity of Indian melodrama to come up with this dance ballet that is more theatre than dance. "It is not strictly a dance ballet, it's more of a theatre ballet," admits Shankar, who was involved in even minute details of the production—from the angle of a dancer's turban to the size of a pendant on an artiste's breast. Much of the choreography was by the husband and wife duo of V.P. and Shanta Dhananjayan whose troupe Bharata Kalanjali provided half of the dancers while the Kathak performers came from Ahmedabad-based Kumudini Lakhia's troupe Kadamb.

The plot revolves loosely around two couples, neighbours, one north Indian—Ghanshyam and Lalitha, the other south Indian—Ramana, a Bharatanatyam teacher and his wife Kanta. The two live in harmony practising their distinct dance traditions together. The vibrant patch work of song and dance is gradually ripped apart as Ghanshyam becomes a drug addict and eventually dies. Ghanshyam's death has the ultimate stamp of the maestro's *masala*—he dies of heart failure, while irate villagers chase him after he has stolen a zamindar's jewel. After all the poetry of Kathak and the sensuality of Bharatanatyam, and the helpless grief of Ramana and Kanta, comes this awkward turn. But it is a minor stumble. Ghanshyam's disconsolate spirit returns to possess Kanta.

If one were to go by looks alone Kanta is no beauty. She is middle aged, with a thick waist and broad face, and one wonders why Ghanshyam would look at her when he has the softness and warmth of Lalitha. However, on a second glance, Kanta has all the sensual grace and tensile strength of the archetypal earth mother. And in a production that is marred by a constant lack of coordination, Shanta Dhananjayan's portrayal of the woman possessed by the powerful brooding spirit of Ghanshyam was the piece de resistance.

In the cliched denouement, Lalitha offers herself for the ultimate sacrifice—Ghanshyam's spirit is wrenched from Kanta's body and driven into Lalitha's and the next day dance lessons resume. Life goes on. The music score was more memorable than the ballet itself, *filmi* though it was, it had its brilliant moments.

In the final analysis, while *Ghanshyam* has all the sensuality of the Indian epic, the colour of Indian life and the rhythms of classical dance, the core is what Salman Rushdie would have described as the "hot, sticky heart of a Bombay talkie."

—KAVITHA SHETTY

SHARAD SAXENA



SHYAM TEKWANI



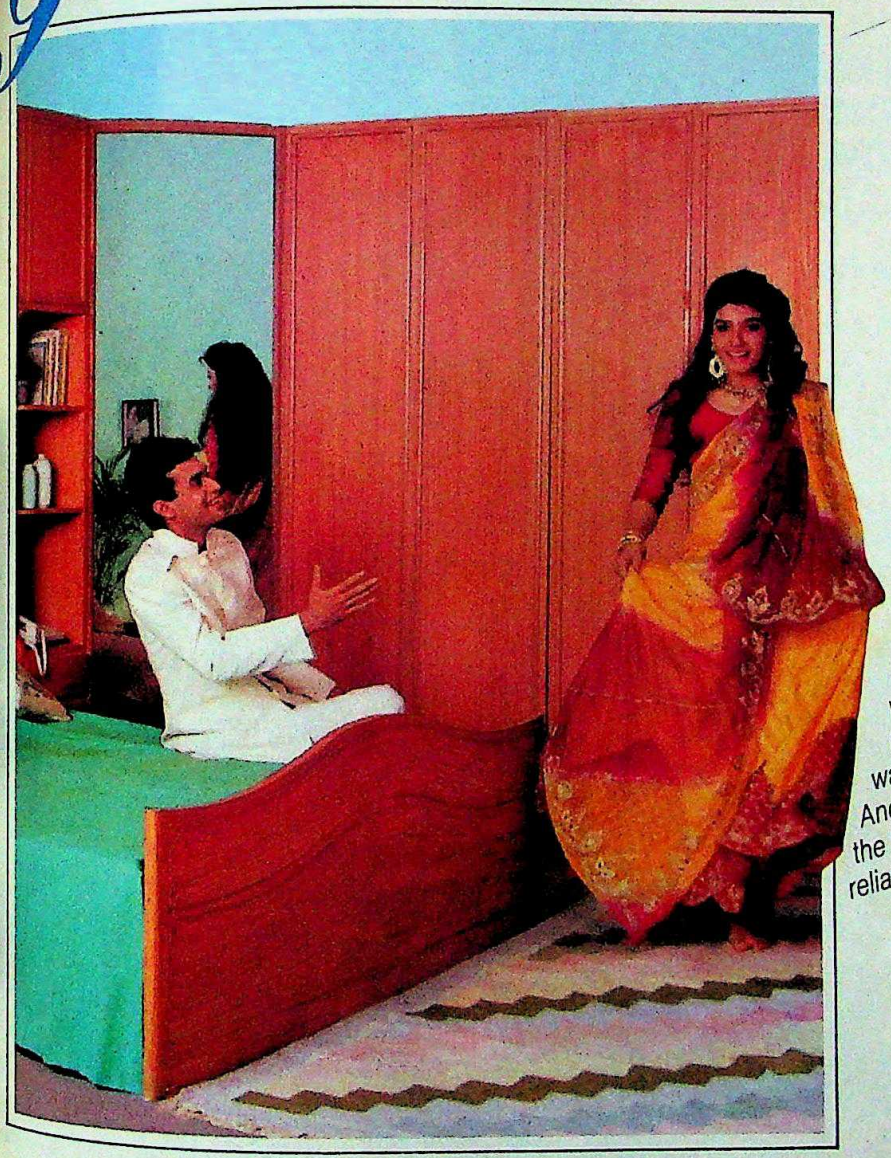
A scene from *Ghanshyam*; and (inset) Shankar: *filmi* fare

A contemporary drama, the ballet is more theatre than dance.

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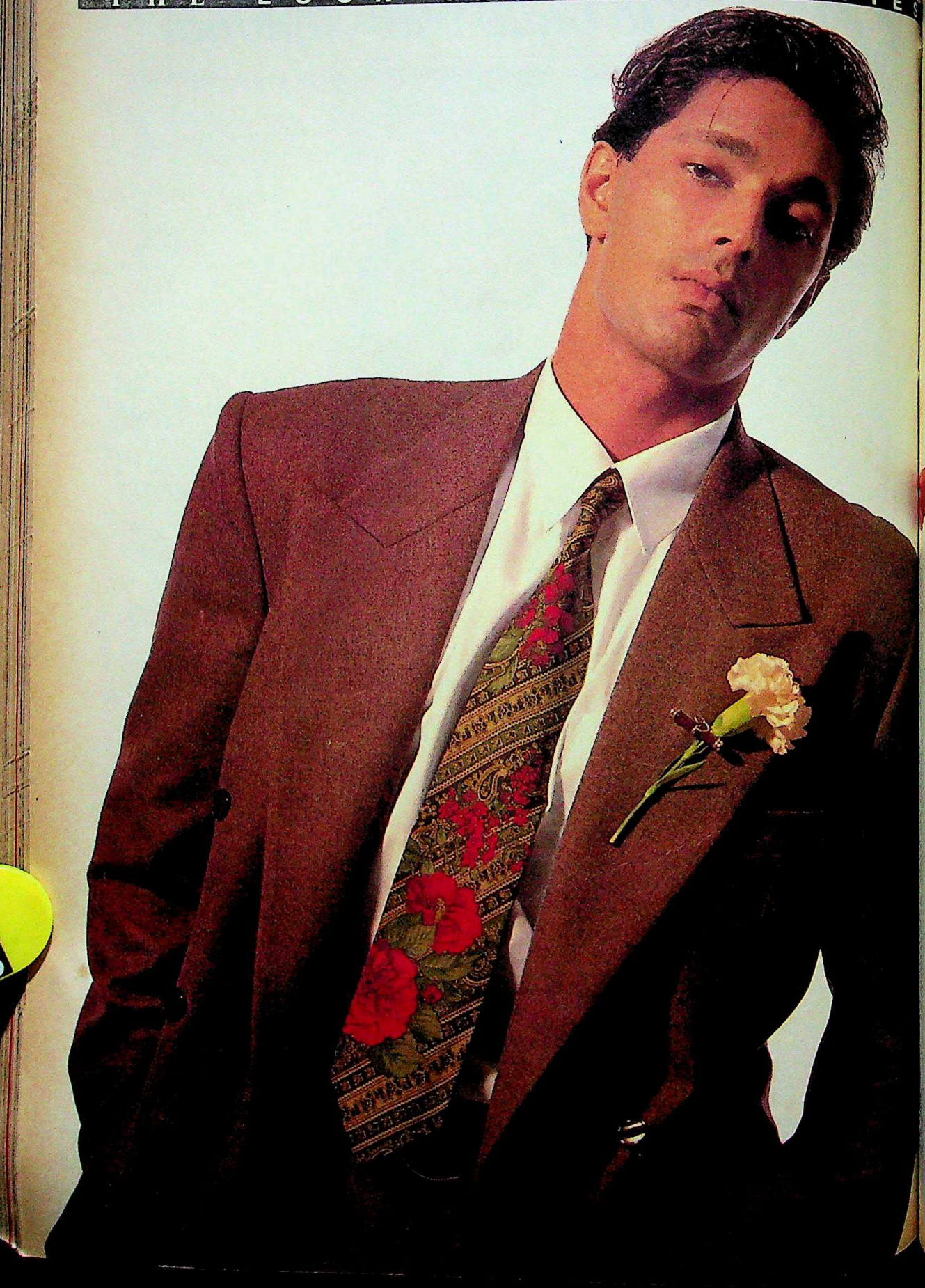
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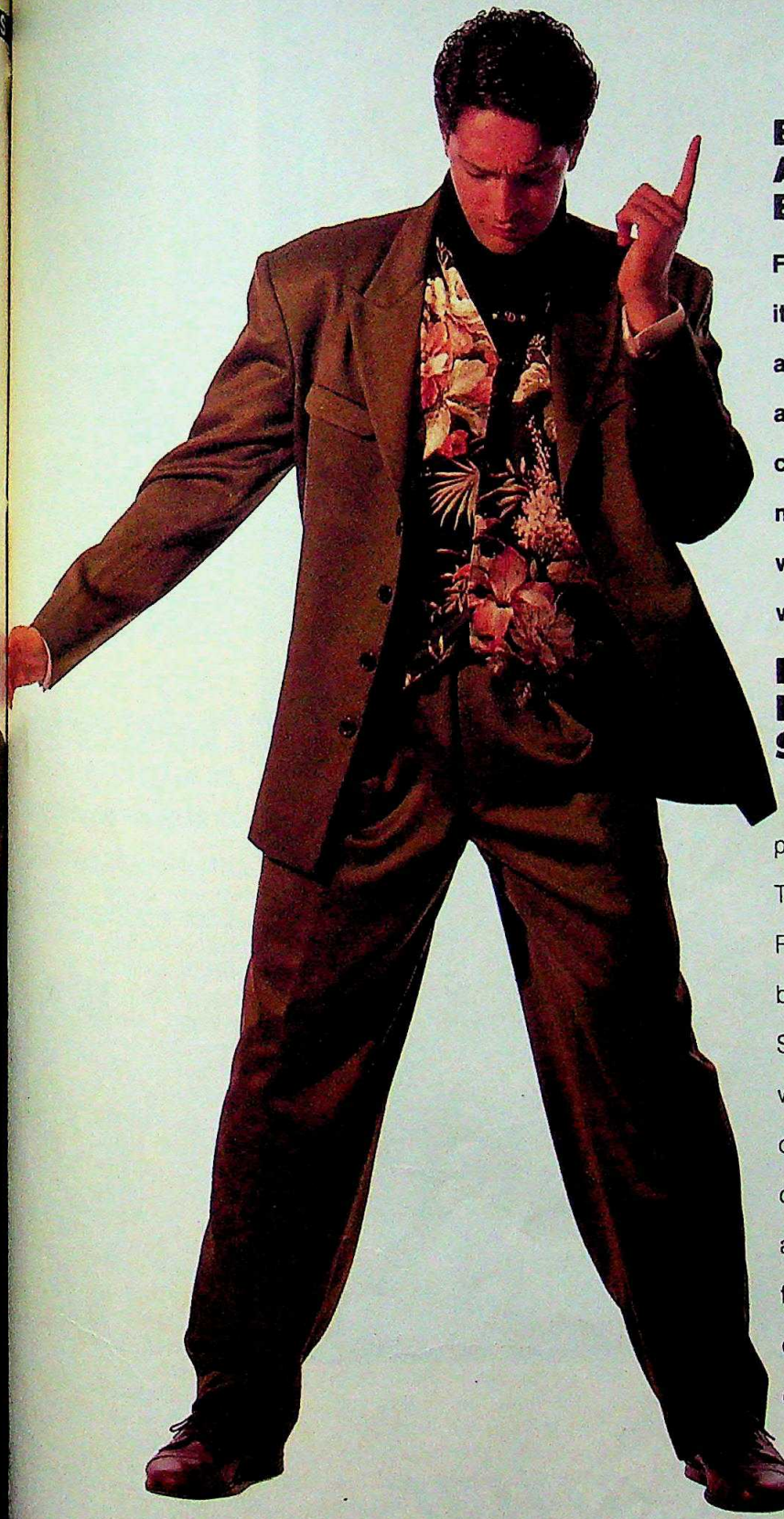
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SAIBAL DAS



AIDS victims and drug addicts in jail

MANIPUR

Spreading Scourge

Drug abuse leads to threat of AIDS epidemic

It is insurgency of the invisible kind. In idyllic Manipur, AIDS (acquired immune deficiency syndrome), the scourge of the late 20th century, is spreading its tentacles, blighting the lives of hundreds of youth. According to a recent estimate of the National Institute of Cholera and Enteric Diseases (NICED), Calcutta, the virus was detected in 947 of the 1,500 samples taken from Manipur since January this year. The institute, which is the AIDS-monitoring agency in eastern India, has not come across such a large figure in the last four years.

The alarming rise is of recent vintage. In 1989, there were 48 known AIDS victims in the country. NICED estimates that in five years, Manipur alone will have 1,600 AIDS patients.

The majority of the victims are teenagers, belonging mainly to the 15-23 years age group, and the source of the epidemic is the use of intravenous syringes among the increasing number of heroin addicts in the state.

According to a 1988 Indian Medical Association survey, Manipur had a mere 600 drug addicts. Today the figure stands at a staggering 15,000.

A clear nexus between AIDS, drug abuse, and drug smuggling is visible. The police say that heroin is being smuggled in in large quantities from across the 400-km Myanmar border, which is inadequately manned by the Border Security Force. Manipur is a vital transit point on the heroin route, and a great deal of the drug finds its way to the growing number of addicts.

The teenage segment that is withering under AIDS presents a pathetic spectacle. Parents unable to cope with affected children are even forcing them into prisons because there are no social organisations to provide the crucial care and counselling. The police faced with the unusual human problem are equally helpless as victims have been attempting suicide in the prisons. As a precaution, toilet doors have been sawed into half, and shoes are being disallowed as a victim attempted to strangle himself with shoe-laces.

Clearly, the response to the looming epidemic is confused, and even callous. Schools are turning away children infected with the virus. Says D. Paukholian, who runs a healing home at Churachandpur for AIDS victims: "Patients have been turned out of church. Even the prisons do not easily accept AIDS-infected persons." A number of them are being sent to the Central Government-run de-addiction centres called 'New Life' but they are proving insufficient.

Drug addiction, which is at the crux of the AIDS upsurge, has had other dangerous fall-outs too. It has infused into the relatively crime-free Manipuri society juvenile delinquency, including prostitution, theft and murder.

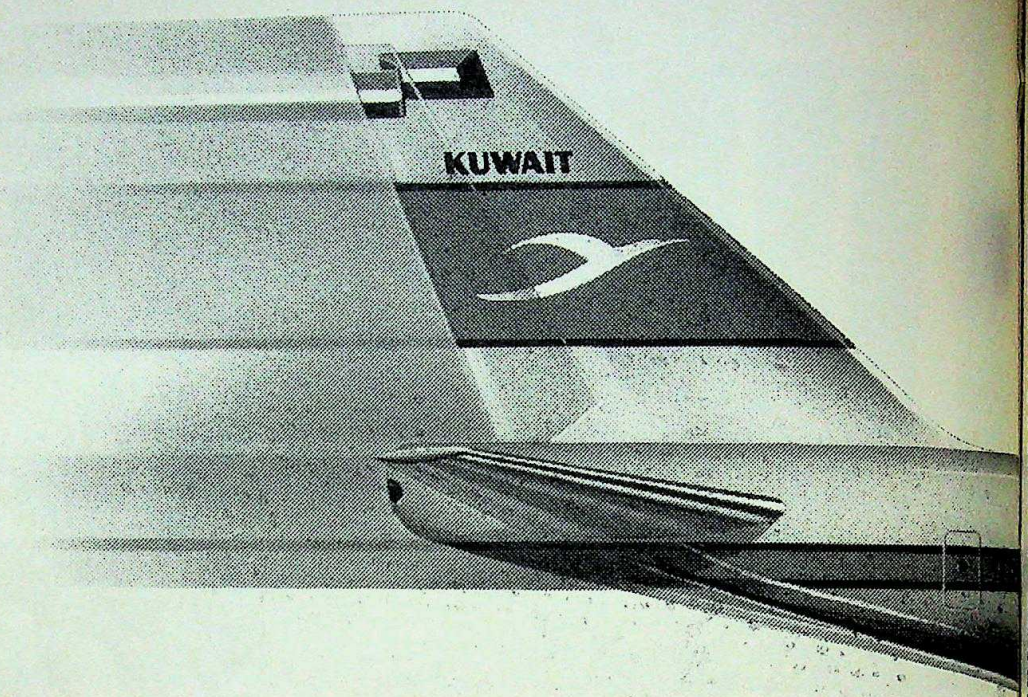
But typically there are also those who are fighting back. As AIDS threatens to engulf tiny Manipur, there are individuals like Vikramjit Singh and William Sehboy Hangsing, who having made their trip to the dark centre of addiction have managed to resurface, and are now trying to help out the sinking and the lost.

Yet little is being done despite a Central Government sanction of Rs 30 lakh for setting up blood banks and de-addiction centres. The Indian Council of Medical Research is willing to set up laboratories in Imphal to carry out the expensive blotting test for detecting AIDS. Until now the tests were carried out in far away Calcutta. Clearly, only the state Government has to gear itself up to meet the AIDS challenge. Apathy will lead to tragic consequences on a horrendous scale.

—UTTAM SENGUPTA in Imphal

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BOXING

Packing a New Punch

Indian boxers excel in the Sixth World Cup debut

NEVER before had such cries been heard at a World Cup boxing championship: "Yadav", "Thanga", "India", "India". Though boxing was introduced in the subcontinent by British soldiers more than a century ago, no Indian boxer has ever left a mark in any Olympic or World Cup contest. The performance even against other Asian boxers had fallen—at the Beijing Asiad, India had to be content with just a single boxing bronze.

The staging of the Sixth World Cup Boxing Championship in Bombay last fortnight was therefore something of a coup for the Indian Amateur Boxing Federation (IABF). Not only did India host the championship for the first time—Havana and Dublin had earlier hosted the World Cup for the other weight categories—but Indian boxers also made their maiden appearance in the ring at the international meet.

Earlier there was no question of the Government granting permission to an Indian boxing team to go for the prestigious meet in the previous years as the standard of boxing was low. This time as hosts, India could enter two in each category compared to one by other countries. And what a debut it turned out to be!

Five Indian boxers made it to the quarter-finals, punching aside an Asian and a Commonwealth champion. Three of them moved on to the semi-finals. Only one, Sarabjeet Singh, in the super heavyweight category, reached the penultimate round undeservedly, thanks to gaps created by a last-minute withdrawal by the Soviets. Nevertheless, quite amazingly, both the boxers figuring in the box-off for the light flyweight bronze were from India—Dharmendra Singh Yadav of Delhi and Zhoram Thanga of Mizoram.

Thanga won, and created history, becoming the first Indian boxer to win a medal at the World Cup. The Mizoram Government sports official is also only the second Indian to get a world championship medal in an individual Olympic discipline after Independence—the first was also a bronze by K.Jadhav in wrestling at the 1952 Helsinki Olympics. "It was absolutely fantastic. Who would have thought before the tournament that Indian boxers would create most of the upsets?" exulted IABF President Aspy Adajania. Added the Pakistani President of the Association Internationale De Boxe Amateur (AIBA), Anwar Chowdhry: "The performance of

Photographs by NAMAS BHOJANI



Zhoram Thanga (left) defeated Dharmendra Singh Yadav in the light flyweight semi-finals to become the second Indian ever to get a World championship medal in any sport.

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Indian boxers came as an absolute surprise. I've watched them for 30 years, and never seen such a courageous display like this time."

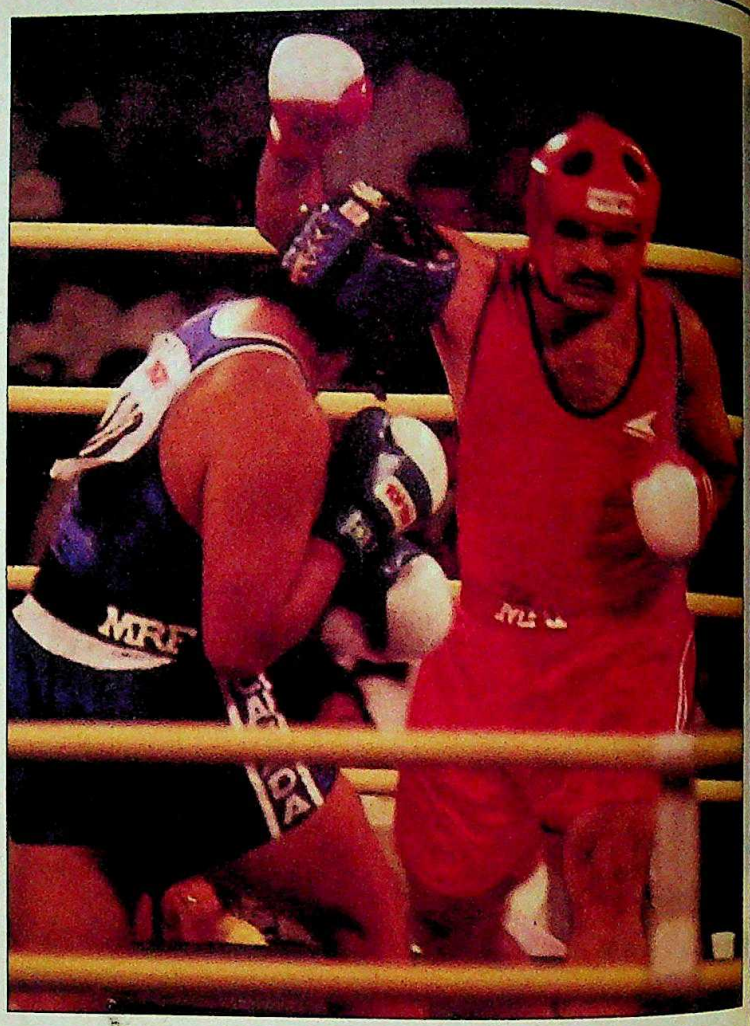
The man mainly responsible for India's surprise performance said very little. In halting English, Anatoly Volkov, the national boxing coach from Moscow, explained: "Last one year the boys did lot of hard work. This is all the result. Now very important they have confidence. But they need more international experience."

However, a question mark hangs over Volkov's continued association with the national team. Since last year, the earnest, unassuming Russian has been coaching Indian boxers at the new Sports Authority of India (SAI) gymnasium in Bangalore. He has built up their confidence gradually, letting each boxer develop his individual style, improving basic techniques and emphasising the need for rigorous physical and psychological conditioning. Said veteran Ugandan coach Peter Seruwagi: "Obviously the Russian coach has made a difference. I'm very surprised by India's performance. Indian boxers now show they are thinking about technique, especially in the lighter weights."

Volkov's two-year contract however expires in January, and typically, neither SAI nor the Government has informed him yet if it will be renewed. Shyly, he points out that two years is too short a time for a coach to build up a national boxing team. He would be happy to stay, but even after Thanga and Yadav got boxing fans hysterical in Bombay, there was no word from Delhi. Instead, impressed by the Indian boxers' performance, Turkey quickly made an offer to the Russian coach. Adajania sent an urgent message to the Government, hoping that Volkov would not be lost to India thanks to bureaucratic inertia.

Even if Delhi remained unimpressed, the Sixth World Cup Boxing Championship certainly demonstrated what an efficient sports body can do. IABF organised the Rs 85-lakh event, held for the first time open air, entirely on its own initiative. The World Cup was named after MRF, which donated Rs 50 lakh and the gold-plated trophy. The Maharashtra Government gave Rs 4 lakh, while the Centre has promised Rs 5 lakh.

The Bombay Gymkhana grounds, where historic cricket and hockey fixtures have been held in the past, was converted into a makeshift boxing arena. With the new, computerised scoring system, the tournament went off without a hitch except for a scare on the final day thanks to a short drizzle.



Sarabjeet (right) who got a walkover to the super heavyweight semifinals was outclassed by Canadian Linklater.

FOR eight days, as many as 5,000 spectators turned up to watch 65 boxers from 25 countries fight for top honours in four weight categories—light flyweight (48 kg), bantamweight (54 kg), light middleweight (71 kg), and super heavyweight (91 kg plus). "It was perfect. There may have been doubts initially about holding it open air, but that actually helped create a lovely, relaxed atmosphere," pointed out Sam Hickman, the American boxing coach who has trained Joe Frazier and also had a stint with the Indian team in the early '80s.

The head guards used in the World Cup were all made from new safer materials manufactured by Bayer Germany, making it virtually impossible to score a knock-out. Better helmets, gloves and computerised scoring have converted power punching into a pointless exercise.

While both Thanga and Yadav excelled in the light flyweight category, the Cubans, expectedly, dominated the championship and walked away with the World Cup. But in Bombay, for the first time, Indian boxers realised that they could stand up to the world champions and attain heroic status.

As Hickman observed, the talent has always been there; what is needed is technique and discipline. If the youthful boxers keep punching with the same courage and skill, then India may one day even produce a world boxing champion.

—M. RAHMAN

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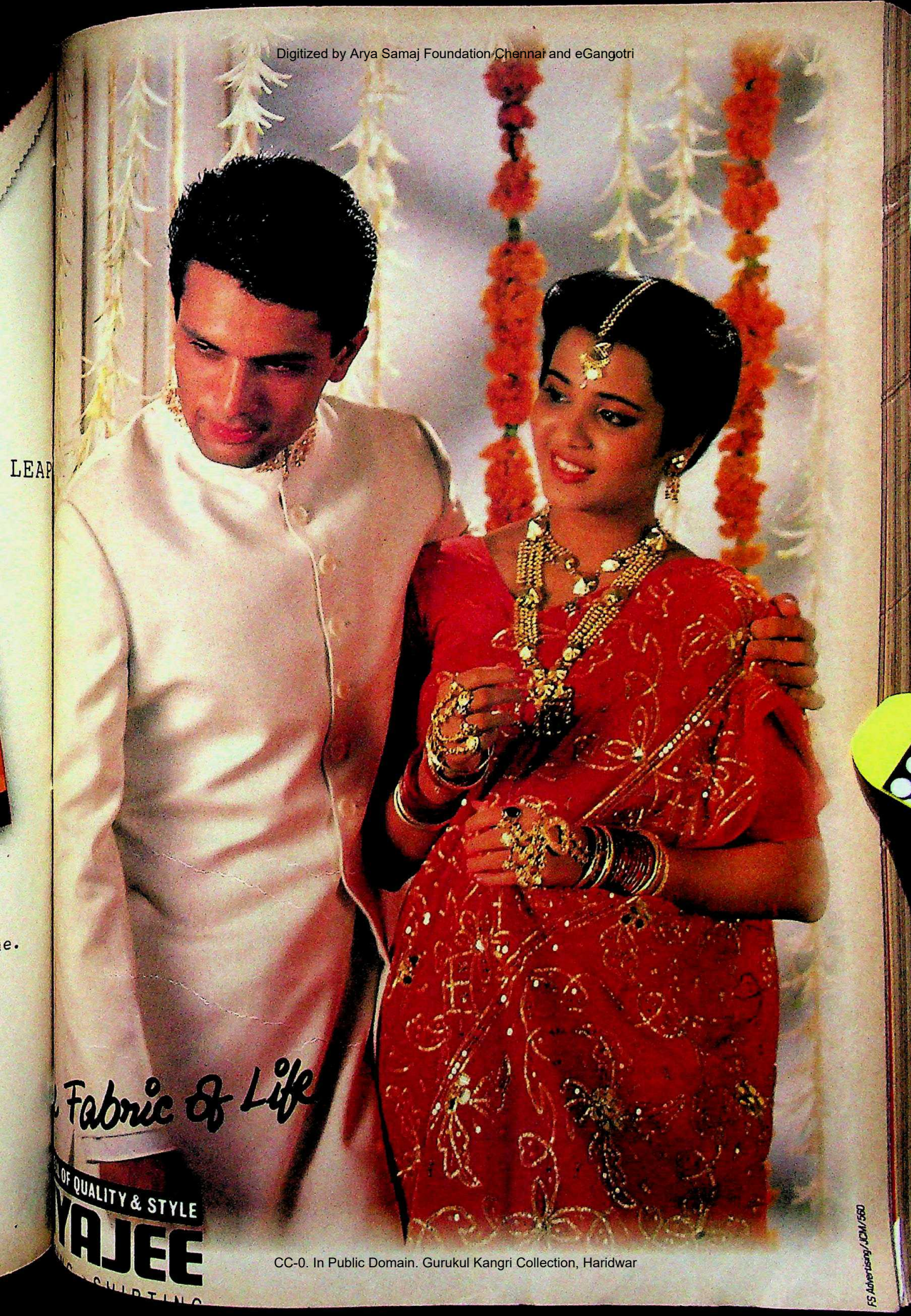


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SAREES

Exotic Experiments

Designers turn their creativity to the so far untouched Indian garment

IT is the symbol of traditional, unchanging India—the saree: staid, standard and almost sacred. Now, the most traditional of Indian garments has a new look coming that is anything but boring. In fact, the jokes are all over—the saree, that is. Designer Satya Paul, 49, who sells through four salons bearing his name, recently signed off a saree that actually has jokes on it.

Another one from his avant-garde collection has cartoons, one mourns the dying forests, another has a world map travelling through the border—and yet another remembers Van Gogh's *Crows over the Wheatfield*. He calls them saries—spelt differently—to symbolise the radical change. "The average 5-ft Indian woman was sacrificed by the saree, framed into borders that cut her length," says Paul, whose saree experiments have figured in *Vogue* and *The New York Times*. "I saw something that had not been updated for many years. It needed a drastic change."

What's going on? Has the saree, the last bastion of Indian tradition, begun to lose its sacred spot high above the changing whirlwind of fashion? The last of the Asian stalwarts, will it, like the kimono, end up in a museum?

Wherever there's money there's a designer lurking somewhere. Ever since *haute couture* came in a big rush to India, about five years ago, designers sprouted everywhere, fighting over who could put more mirrors in their salwar-kurtas. But the saree, cocooned as it was in tradition, they would not touch. It was sacred, eternal—besides, it was what mother wore. But such emotive issues no longer seem to matter to the designers always on the look-out for fresh pastures. This year, several designers have begun experimenting with the saree, predicting that it will eventually top the fashion charts. "There are many women who only wear sarees but don't want this whole fashion thing to pass them by," says Tarun Tahiliani of Ensemble boutique in Bombay.

But you cannot tamper with the saree and not run into trouble. As a result, it has turned into an emotionally charged issue that is dividing the fashion world into the rebels and purists. "These people are not designers, they are just decorators, the value adders," says Martand Singh, the prime mover behind the purist Vishwakarma collections. Traditionalist women are mad too. "I can go designer in any other costume, but touching the saree is a violation," says Mala Burman, a housewife and big buyer of traditional sarees. "This experimentation should be nipped in the bud."

Others are excited about the innovation and gimmickry that is going on in the sacred sphere. Mutiny, the aptly-named Delhi boutique, recently opened a new chapter dealing with designer sarees that are a major departure from the pretty but timid Vichitra and Nalini boutique-type sarees. Tahiliani's sarees, for instance, are nine metres long (you get more saree for your money), held up with a belt, and often have a pallu in a different fabric to give the effect of a dupatta. Says Tahiliani,



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The avant-garde saree: trendy yet traditional

Designers say that a woman who would choose an experimental saree is generally independent and driven by a sense of fun.



e sarees cost over Rs 10,000 each: "Many think it's sacrilege to touch the saree. I they are just stuffy." His sarees are nitely not stuffy: in fact his cholis have little fabric cut out to let the skin peep through. hal, who sells over 20,000 designer sarees r, is also experimenting with the form: the could be turned into a shawl. Or the saree go turtleneck instead of over the shoul- Another non-conventional style is worn a blazer that has an opening at the ller to pull the pallu through. This is for oman who wonders what to wear on a winter evening without having to manage ee and a shawl and a bag.

ESIGNER Rohit Khosla, who recently howed his collection at Munich, has lone a series of environmental sarees: rowns embroidered with bone and wood ther elements going extinct. The mes- this is what the state of the earth would be continue to use these natural materials. rtheless, state-of-the-conscience sarees e worn very unconventionally. ding to Khosla: "Tuck a saree into ckar instead of a petticoat. Or wear a sharara that shows at the bottom. rybe with slinky, sexy, off-shoulder blouses."

signers say that a woman who would e an experimental saree is indepen- driven by a sense of fun and would buy saree herself. It would not be a gift. This oman, who as one designer put it, "has with herself."

e purists don't agree. "I'm completely people changing the saree into a con-structed garment," says designer Rakesh Thakur, who was largely responsible for bringing small, elegant borders back in his huge collections for Co-Optex. "A saree has its very own format. What's going on is the beginning of destruction."

The first to touch—some say molest—the saree was Zandra Rhodes who created holes in the saree for arms and head, cut the border in jagged edges and did other bizarre things that led to a major national controversy.

The Zandra Rhodes affair ended with a whimper. But it scared designers off the saree for a few years. This year, though, almost all fashion people agree that the saree is destined to make a big come-back—as a fashion garment. Says saree historian Amba Sanyal who is working on a series of books on *The Sarees of India*: "People are rediscovering the saree. It does not age, it is not size specific, and you can pass it on. There is a deep bond between the Indian woman and the saree."

Now it is being recognised not just by the region—Benaras, Tangail, Kanjeevaram—but also by the designer who actually signs his name on it. Among the better known designer labels are Asha Sarabhai who leaves behind a very strong stamp on everything she touches: tiny, geometric prints in earth colours, and Anu Mafatlal who does gold elephants, horses, hooves on muted Kanjeevaram silks.

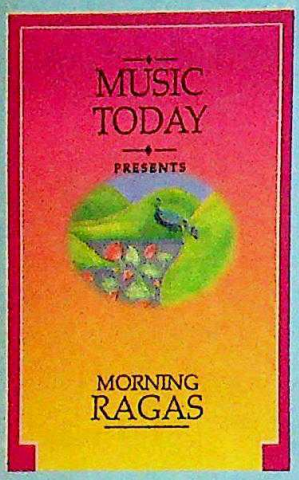
In the last year, an entirely new range of saree designers has risen from the film world: Pallavi Jaikishen, Kiron Kher, Sunita Kapoor. You even had painters like M.F. Husain and Anjolie Ela Menon experimenting with the new form. They cater to the woman who wants to

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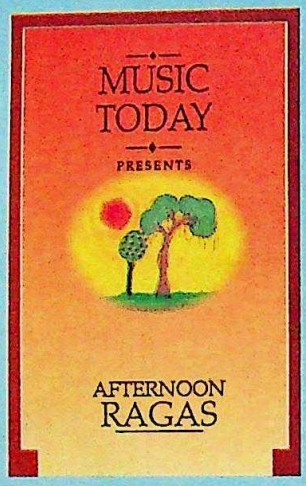


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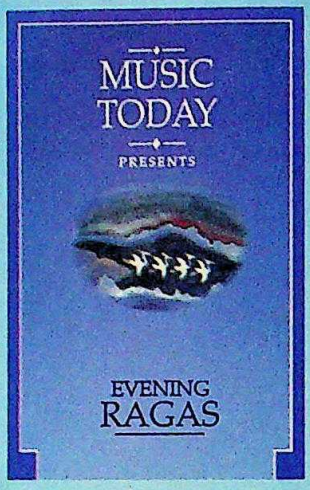


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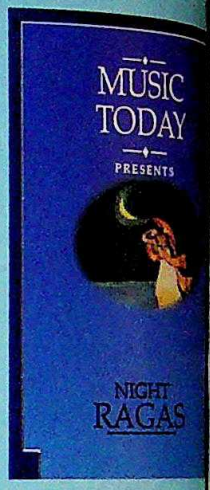


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experiment—but not stray too far from tradition.

A major reason for the come-back is that ethnic is on its way out. "The age of *bandhini lehngas*, 300 bangles and little black bindis on the chin is definitely over," says designer Suneet Varma. "All these young girls are quite willing to get into a saree—but with a difference," says Chandigarh-based designer Rewa Lamba, who every month sells over 300 sarees—with jackets or done in zip-up sarong style. Her motifs: Mesopotamian boats, Cleopatra type faces, Greek script, Indus Valley seals—and sometimes all together. As she says: "One starts with a plan in mind but it keeps changing."

THE new urge is to put together not just a saree, but a look. The *nouvelle* saree can be worn with leather boots, funky jewellery, jackets, Cartier bracelets, 8-ft long plaits. Ultimately, designers say, the saree is the sexiest of all garments. "You do a whole number with a saree," says Varma. "You let the pallu drop, you throw it around, you wear a sheer blouse. As long as you don't tamper with the saree, it doesn't matter what you do with the accessories." But now it is the saree that is being tampered with raising many plucked eyebrows.

Blouses, for instance, are doing a fashion turnaround that's quite acceptable even to the purists. The permutations are endless: five pleat puff sleeves, Nehru collars with a brooch, backless blouses, peek-a-boo blouses, long blouses with slits at the side, and even rough khadi blouses with slinky crepe sarees.

Either way, the saree is heading toward a different look as even Martand Singh confessed: "Once I leave all this ethnic business in about two years, I'm going into heavily embroidered petticoats and blouses worn with the finest organza sarees."

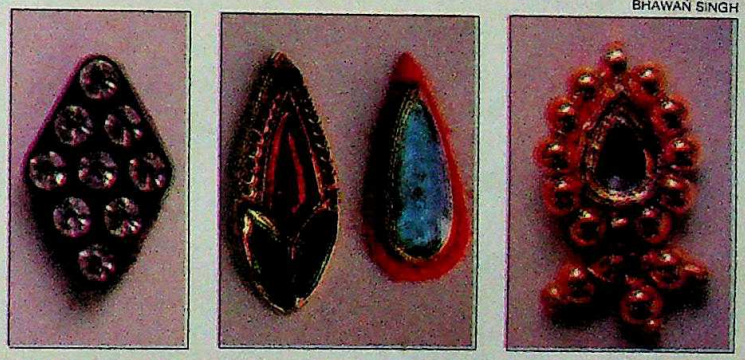
The innovation in the saree world is reaching out both ways: the avant-garde as well as a revival of antique traditions like the kaantha (hand done in earth monotones). "The saree has suddenly become a fashion garment which may be its downfall, for all you know," says historian Sanyal. Then she adds: "But you know, sometimes I too feel like playing around with it."

—SIMRAN BHARGAVA

BINDIS

Forehead Fantasies

BHAWAN SINGH



Bindis studded with diamonds; enamel and mina work; and kundan work

THE Indian ensemble is never complete without that one accessory—the bindi. For as long as one can remember the bindi has been synonymous with the third eye, the all seeing, all knowing emblem that is characteristic of the Indian woman. However, the "round dot" is no longer just round. It can be square, triangular, rectangular or any of the thousands of improvisations that have revolutionised the humble bindi and made it a fashion statement.

There are diya designs that cover the entire forehead, a snake waiting to strike, a lotus in full bloom, a shell, two snakes linked together. The variations are endless.

While the usual velvet stick-ons are still to be found in the shops, the creative wave has produced bindis varying from the extremely ornate to the absolutely exclusive. The bindi revolution shows no signs of slowing down—each day, it seems, a new design appears.

Vividha on Bombay's Napean Sea Road displays over 6,000 varieties. And while the majority are priced at between Rs 2 and Rs 9, there are bindis which can cost Rs 1,000 made of real diamonds and worn on special occasions. The rather expensive variety are rawa gold work and white kundan bindis which retail for anything between Rs 100 and Rs 500 each.

Improvisations have transformed the humble and popular bindi, and made it a strong fashion statement.

According to jeweller Rajiv Parshad of Abhushan in Delhi, clients give him designs to make that range from real gold and mina work to the pearl effect that has pearls literally dangling on the forehead. Depending on the size and of course the attendant paraphernalia it could even work out to as much as Rs 1,200. Bindis are now big business.

It's not just the shops that are getting innovative. People are also taking the initiative and are coming up with designs that are virtual *objets d'art*. Swati Jain has been wearing bindis ever since she can remember and now creates her own designs.

BHAWAN SINGH



And if sarees are getting more bizarre, so are the bindis. The mood today is one of colour and movement that has given the bindi a fresh lease of life. Says Anju Sinha, an enthusiastic collector of bindis: "I couldn't imagine life without them, they're so much a part of my being."

—KUSUM SAWHNEY

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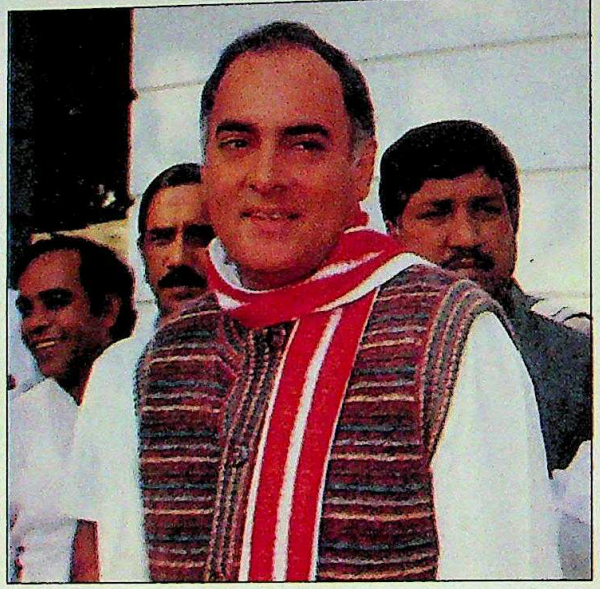
PRAMOD PUSHKARNA

◆ Rajiv Gandhi is like an absentee landlord. But landlord all the same. With quick-change governments the order of the day, DD's back room boys don't know whose line to toe. When in doubt show them all. The clan is in any case back. The camera lingered on Sonia, Priyanka and Rajiv during the music recital at the Teen Murti lawns on Nehru's birth anniversary. The new prime minister was also there but almost out of the picture—DD's that is. On Mrs Gandhi's birth anniversary, the news was full of her.

"Whatever we do, Rajiv is at the back of our minds," says a producer. So it seems are his men. The camera seems focused on Buta Singh and H.K.L. Bhagat.

◆ The nine o'clock serial seems to be facing periodic encroachments. And from none less than prime ministers themselves. Clearly, prime time has become prime minister time. Mandi House is in a tizzy re-scheduling its programmes for an additional reason: they are running out of shows. So the splurge of canned programmes on classical music at what should be entertainment hour. The reason: producers can't get sponsors for even approved serials. Another reason for the musical interlude: there's no one at the helm to take any decisions. Since Bhaskar Ghose was edged out, there has only been an acting director general—Shiv Sharma. The change in government has made the picture even more confused.

◆ Funny times are here again. Deadpan Jaspal Bhatti of *Ulta Pulta* fame is returning with a new series called the *Flop Show*. These half hour satires on corruption will even make the corrupt laugh. There's one on how to get a cottage industry to make serials. Coconuts were not cracked for the *mahurat*. A black cat was let out of a bag. In Bhatti's topsy-turvy world, this must mean good luck.



▲ Rajiv Gandhi: back in the picture

◆ It's also time for adult tales on the small screen. Big City, Red Lights. *Ekai, Dahai, Sainkada* based on Bimal Mitra's novel about the *demi-monde* of the brothel and busty businessmen masquerading as freedom fighters will soon be telecasted. Raghunath Jhalani directs the serial and tale is told through the story of Kunti (Sangeeta Nath) who works in Aunty Padma's (Rohini Hattangadi) brothel. The cast includes Shri Ram Lagoo, A.K. Hangal and Sushmita Mukherjee.

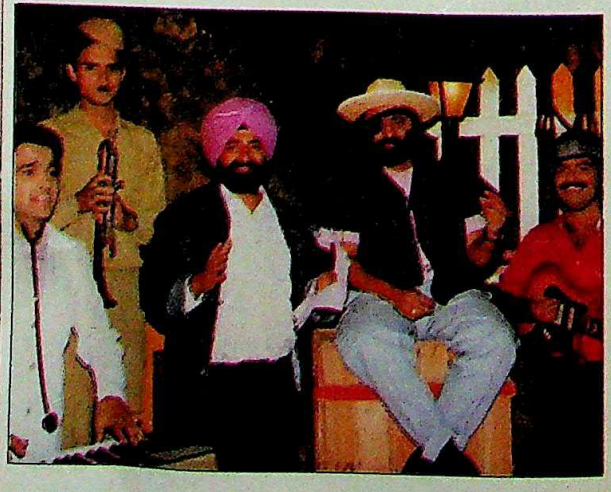


▲ *Ekai Dahai Sainkada*: a story of lust and money

◆ It's the day of the novel—on the small screen.

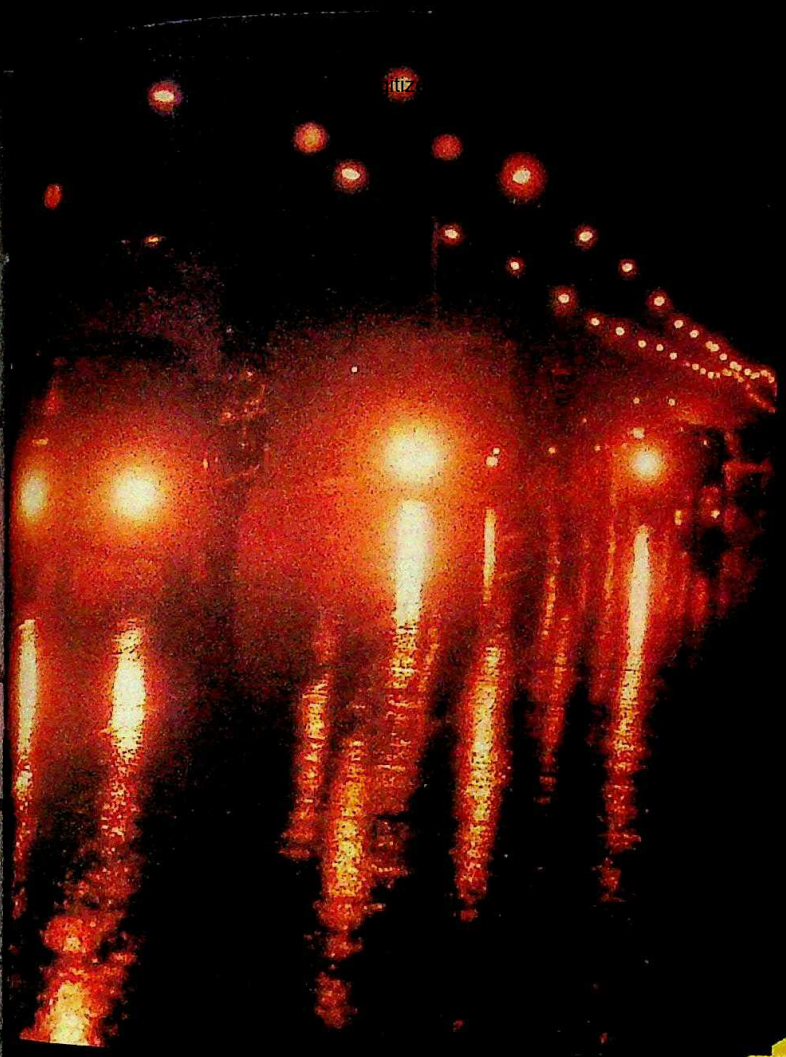
While chapter and worse of *Akhri Dao*, *Yugantar* and *Maila Aanchal* continue to occupy prime time, DD will soon telecast Sarat Chandra Chattopadhya's novel *Charitraheen*. Director Krishna Raghav—of *Raag Darbari* fame—has used Bengali stage-actors in this serial about the life of a child widow. The novel created quite a stir when it was first published as it challenged many of the social taboos of the time. One taboo down, how many more to go before TV moves to contemporary literature. And more manners than morals.

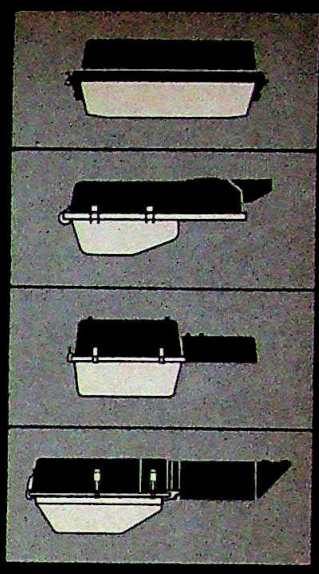
—MADHU JAIN



▲ Bhatti (centre) in the *Flop Show*: cracking corruption

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TECNIMONT, the Ferruzzi Group engineering and construction company, which has been present in India since 1930 with more than 40 plants.
TECNIMONT has recently set up a 60,000 t/y polypropylene plant based on Himont's Spheripol Technology in Nagothane for IPCL.
Among the latest awarding, TECNIMONT has entered into two contracts: one with Gas Authority India Ltd. (GAIL) for the implementation of a 100,000 t/y polypropylene plant, based on Himont's Spheripol Technology to be set up in Vijaipur and another one with DCL Synthetics and Chemicals Ltd. for the implementation of a 12,000 t/y acrylic fibre plant to be set up in Hyderabad.
In order to confirm and furtherly increase its presence in India, TECNIMONT has set up in collaboration with the local, engineering company ICB Industrial Consulting Bureau, a local engineering company.
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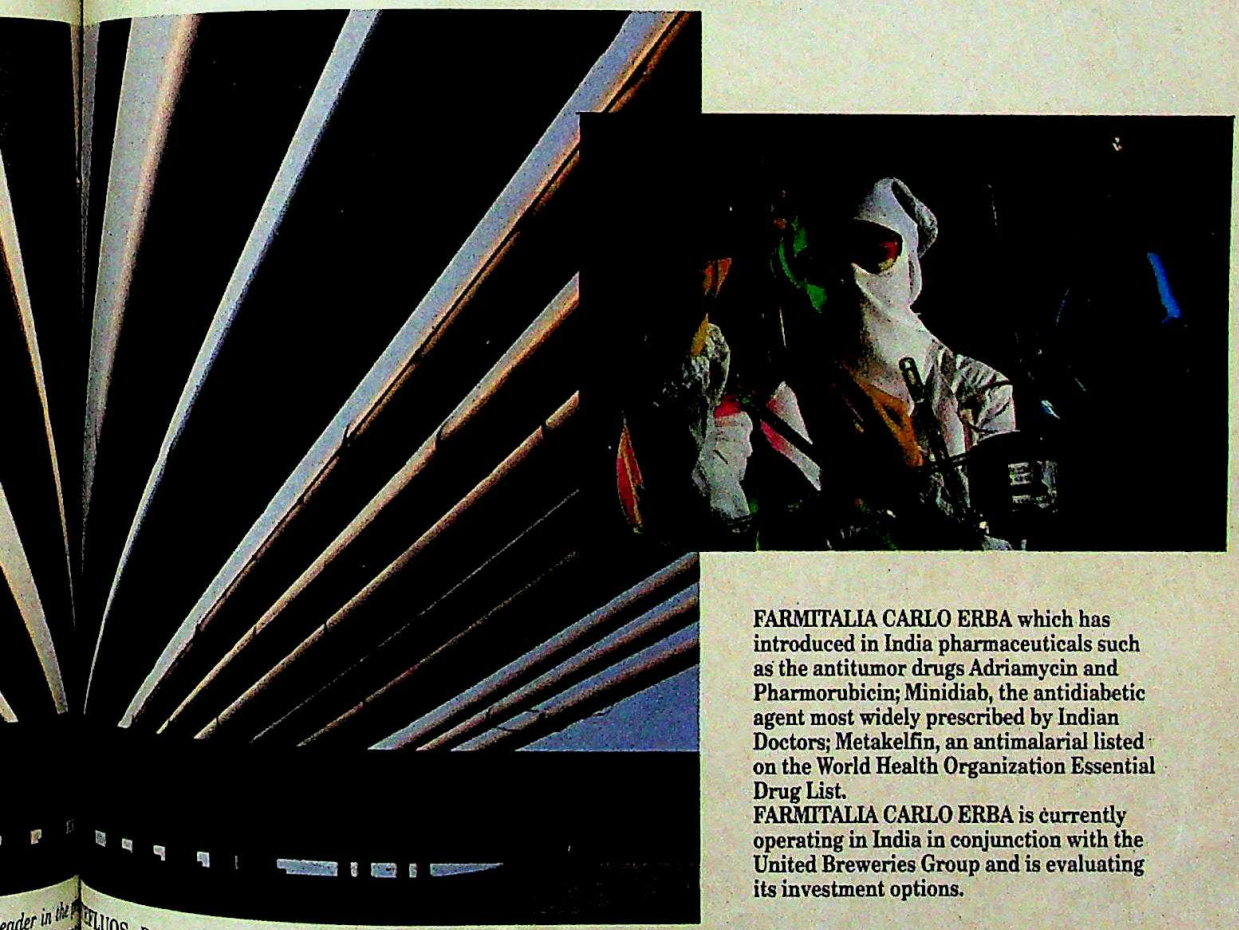
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FARMITALIA CARLO ERBA which has introduced in India pharmaceuticals such as the antitumor drugs Adriamycin and Pharmorubicin; Minidiab, the antidiabetic agent most widely prescribed by Indian Doctors; Metakelfin, an antimalarial listed on the World Health Organization Essential Drug List.
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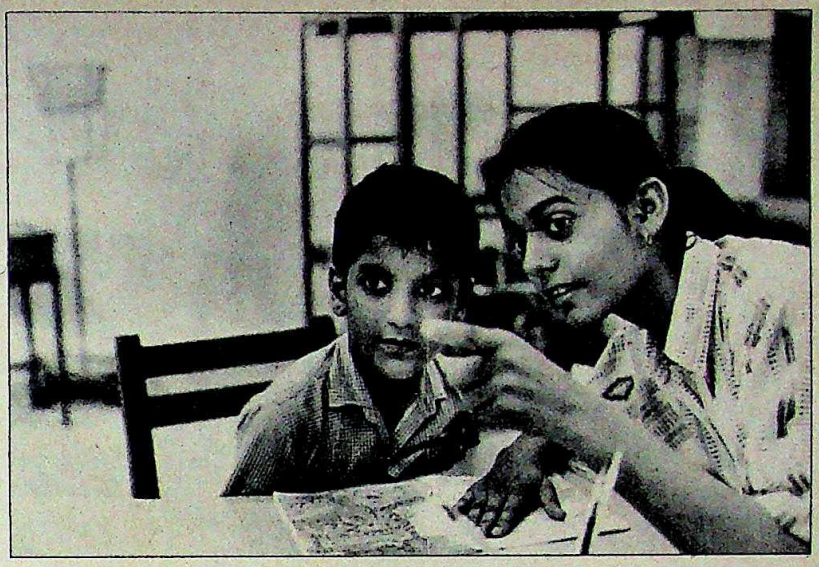
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...SLEXIA

Maligned Malady

Now, awareness and sympathy for disability



A dyslexic with his teacher

ANAND Doshi is seven. He goes to an elite Bombay school. His teachers have branded him stupid. Reason: he would not read at school and could not write a line. He called himself "a buffoon". His intelligence quotient (IQ): 135.

Rajesh Modi is nine. He has already repeated a year at school. He finds reading impossible, is violent with his classmates and shows signs of delinquent behaviour. His IQ: 128.

These children are not juvenile delinquents. Nor are they maladjusted kids. In fact, they are all reasonably intelligent children. What they suffer from is a learning disability which is called dyslexia, meaning "difficulty with words".

So far a misunderstood condition, often even mistaken for mental retardation, dyslexia is no longer an unheard word in India where between 5 and 12 per cent of schoolgoing children are believed to be dyslexic. And as the problem gains recognition, a remedial movement is under way.

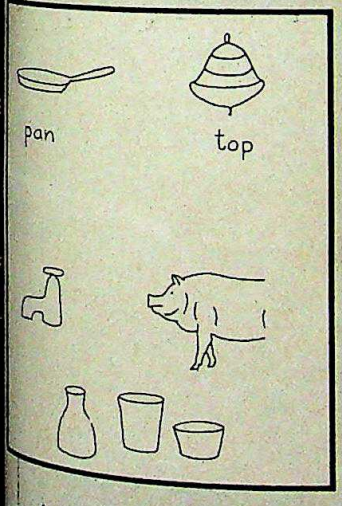
Dyslexia—difficult to pronounce and even tougher to detect—first entered the Indian lexicon five years ago, when Harvard-trained child psychologist Pubali Basu returned to India. She discovered that dyslexia was not recognised in Indian schools even though, according to her estimates, between 2 and 5 per cent of children in every school were dyslexic.

In reality, these children were simply unable to relate their cognitive process to their physical environment. Basu then went on to hold seminars on how to deal with the problem and started an eight-week programme for dyslexic children. Basu's efforts weren't solitary or isolated. The Bombay-based Child Development and Education Centre (CDEC) has also been working in the same direction, offering path-breaking remedial learning techniques to dyslexics.

As myths about dyslexia are slowly dispelled, educationists have successfully developed other skills which allow the child to compensate for dyslexia. In Delhi, Sunita Sodhi, a parent, took the lead in informing teachers about dyslexia. Thanks to her efforts, not only did Delhi see a mushrooming of Childreach centres, but even began to publicise dyslexia through brochures and billboard advertising.

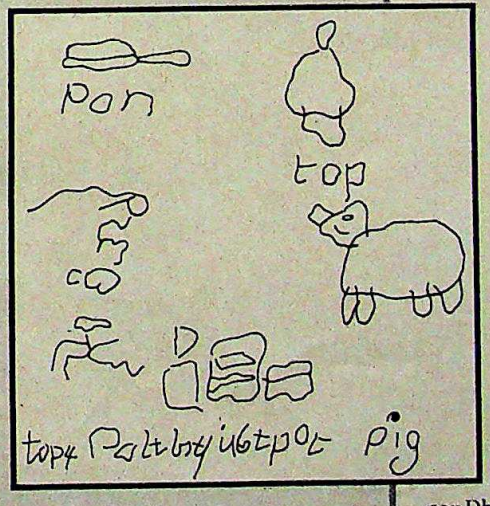
Aside from Delhi's Childreach—which has branches in Bombay, Bangalore, Nagpur and Chandigarh—other organisations working with dyslexics are Bombay's Manu-prem and Sapling. The Department of Special Education of Shrimati Nathibai Damodar Thackersey (SNDT) University in Bombay also works with dyslexics. According to university figures, nearly three-fourths of problem learners sent to its unit are dyslexics. Says SNDT University's Professor Dharmishta Mehta: "It is criminal to brand dyslexics as stupid."

Despite the growing number of dyslexic children in the country and the increasing awareness about it, dyslexia is an aberration not easily tackled. The basic problem dyslexics have is in associating words with pictures, reading and writing. Their perceptual ability is weak. Numbers written on the board do not mean



▲ Figures drawn on the board for students to copy

▼ The figures as copied by a mildly dyslexic child



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anything to them. Frequently, the problem is one of mirror-image—for instance, the alphabet "b" appears as "d"—or of inverted image—where the letter "p" is mistaken for "b".

But a dyslexic's memory tends to be exceptionally good: in fact, many kids substitute memory for reading. They get parents to read stories aloud to them, and memorise the text. (Citicorp's Chief Executive Officer, John Reed, a dyslexic, memorises every document he has to deal with.)

Aware of the coexistence of intelligence and inability, they often mask their weakness by using their intelligence. Example: Pubali Basu tells the story of a class-room where six-year-olds were being shown pictures to develop a story. The picture was of the rising sun, and the sentence beneath read: "The sun is a ball of fire." One child read it as "the sun rises in the east". He wasn't misreading the words after "The sun", he was simply making up words that he found difficult to read.

While the exact cause of dyslexia is not yet known, scientists believe the misconnection between the left and right halves of the brain is one cause for it. While dyslexia could be inherited, poor schooling and health are aggravative, not causative, factors.

The earliest signs of dyslexia can be detected between the ages of six and eight years, when children do not respond to reading and writing, despite being taught adequately. Dyslexics often have common traits *(See box)*: their pencil grip is awkward, their handwriting wayward, or they goof on simple arithmetic problems as well.

The woes of a dyslexic are compounded by our system of education which places a premium on the written word. The load on a student is just too high, making learning a chore, not fun. Says educationist Roshan Mundkur: "Our system is geared to augmenting the problem. The way we apply pressure on our kids in academics only increases the problem. Some succeed, others fall by the wayside." The cost: a whopping drop-out rate of 10 million kids annually.

NOT that all dyslexics are drop-outs. In fact, some of the brightest people in the world are known to be dyslexic: scientists Thomas Alva Edison and Albert Einstein, Renaissance artist Leonardo da Vinci, fairytale writer Hans Christian Andersen, sculptor Auguste Rodin, former US President Woodrow Wilson, World War II General George S. Patton and entertainer Cher. Which is not to say that all dyslexics are necessarily budding geniuses. But they are certainly not the dullard vagrants that they were made out to be until recently.

To rectify dyslexia, the Harvard Medical School developed Cognitive Control Therapy which is now gaining acceptance. Recognising that dyxics have a problem with their atory and visual senses and langu expression, the Cognitive Con Therapy focuses on the dyslexic's tile senses. Under this, children taught addition, for instance, through numbers but through visaids. Example: 5 + 3 is taught by ping five red balls and three red next to each other. More serious ca are made to feel the shape of the let of the alphabet so th they can identify th turns. Explains the cou Roshan Mundkur: "Dy lexia cannot be cured, bu you can certainly help de velop other skills that en able the child to compen sate for the problem."

For writing, the nor mal ruled exercise book are not recommended. I the classroom, dyslexi need to be spoken to soft For them, the writing o the board should be ver clear, and allowance made: more time to com plete work, no red mark on their books, and le homework.

One outcome of th growing awareness is th any child with learnin disabilities is now brande dyslexic, and sent to th already-strained remedi centres. Realising that th problem goes deeper, th Bombay-based Child Development and Educa tion Centre has moved away from handling dys lexic kids to working with schools directly. How ever, some parents sti refuse to recognise th problem, and insist thei child should go for coachi ing or tuition classes which, in fact, accentua ates rather than solve the problem.

Even if identified at an early age, dyslexics can avoid the humiliation of being branded as slow or lazy, and utilise their other exceptional skills productively. It is a tall order, but fortunately attempts in that direction have already begun.

—SALIL TRIPATHI

**The names of all the children have been changed to protect their identity.*

SYMPTOMS

Subtle Slip-ups

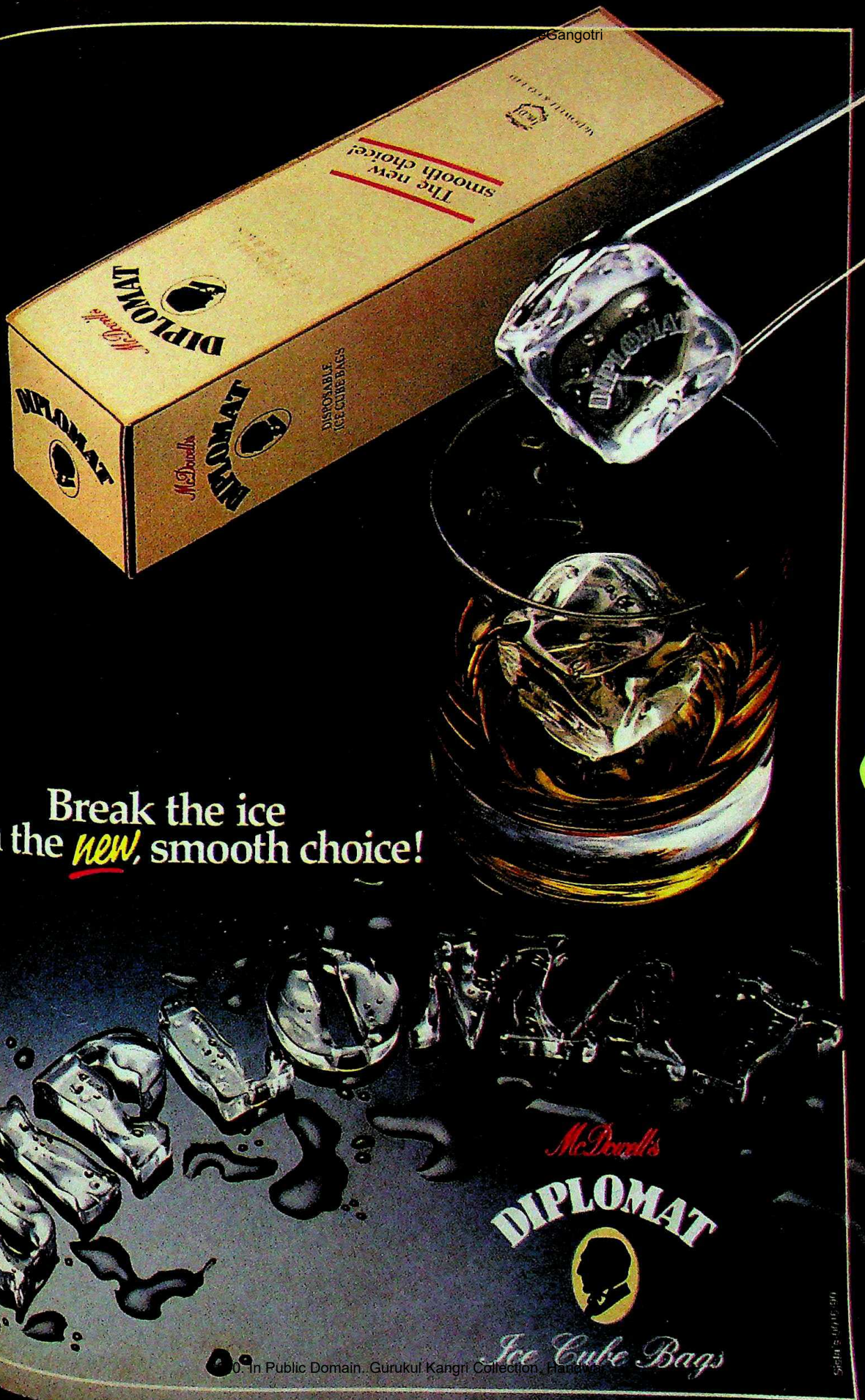


DOES your child go wayward while walking between point A and B? Does he take long reading? Is his handwriting crooked? Though the presence of these factors doesn't always signify dyslexia, dyslexic kids are known to have these problems. Other signs of dyslexia are:

- ► The child appears brighter than his reading or writing suggest.
- ► He makes up stories based on illustrations unrelated to the written text.
- ► He is late in learning how to read time or tie his shoelaces.
- ► He confuses between left and right.
- ► He can't remember things that are sequential: order of days, months, numbers.
- ► He makes anagrams: tired for tried, untied for united.
- ► He reads aloud to himself.
- ► He is left-handed.
- ► He puts stress on the wrong syllables while reading, not while talking.
- ► He reads backward: on for no, saw for was.
- ► He ignores punctuation marks.
- ► He puts syllables in the wrong order: buts-stop for bus-stop.
- ► He shortens words: rember for remember.
- ► He makes typical spelling mistakes like: chidl for child, bad for dab, n as u, m as w.
- ► He spells words as they sound: bizy for busy, mite for might.
- ► He omits letters: train spelt as rain.
- ► His walking is not coordinated.
- ► He is bad at copying from the board.

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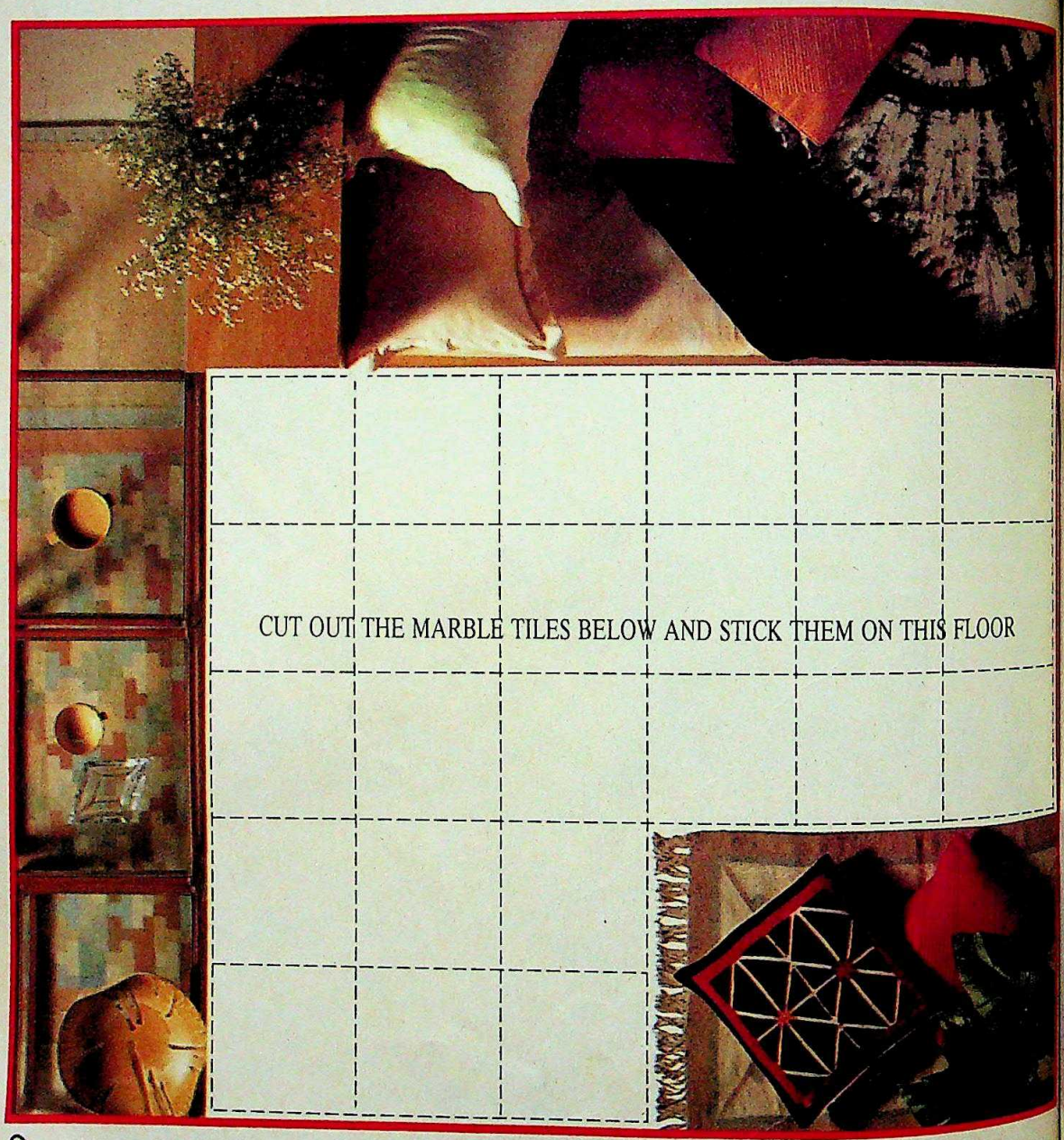
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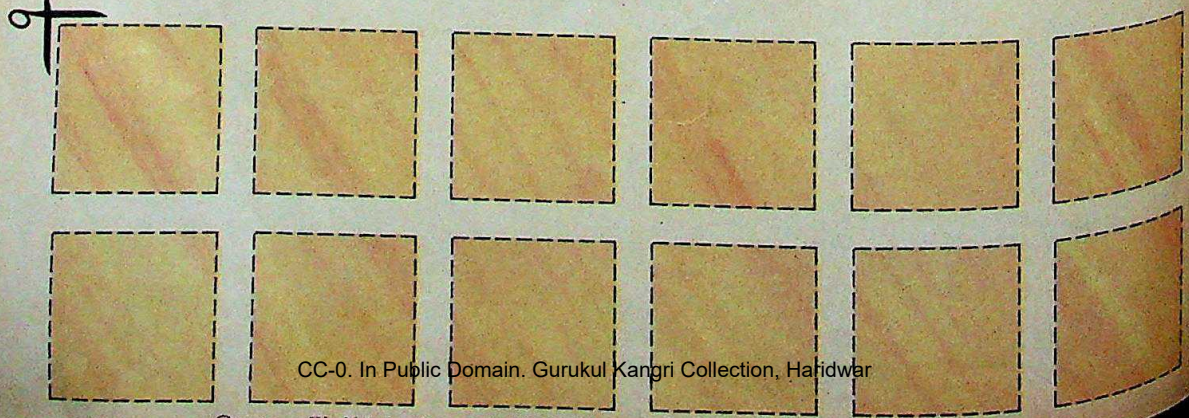


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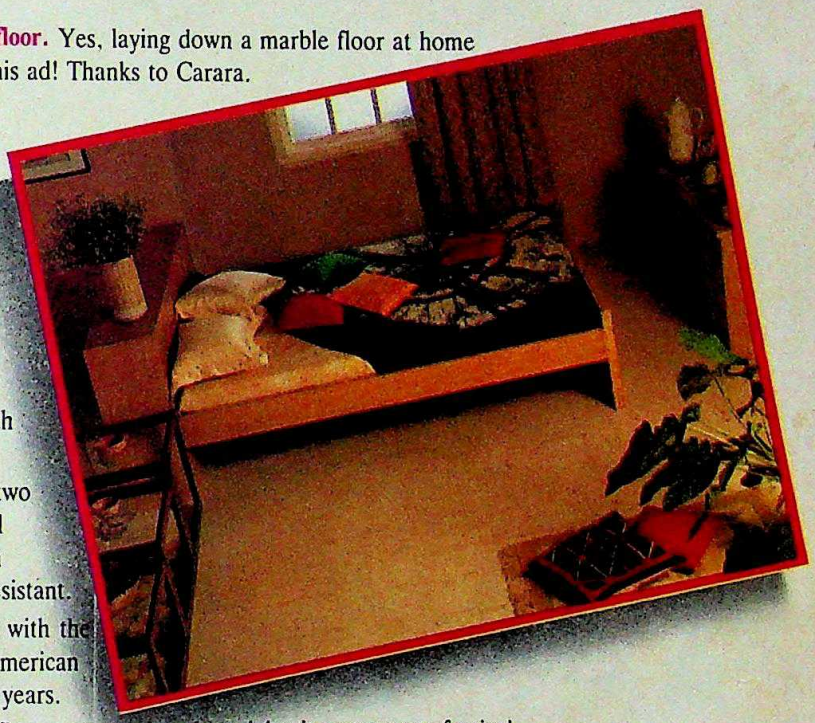
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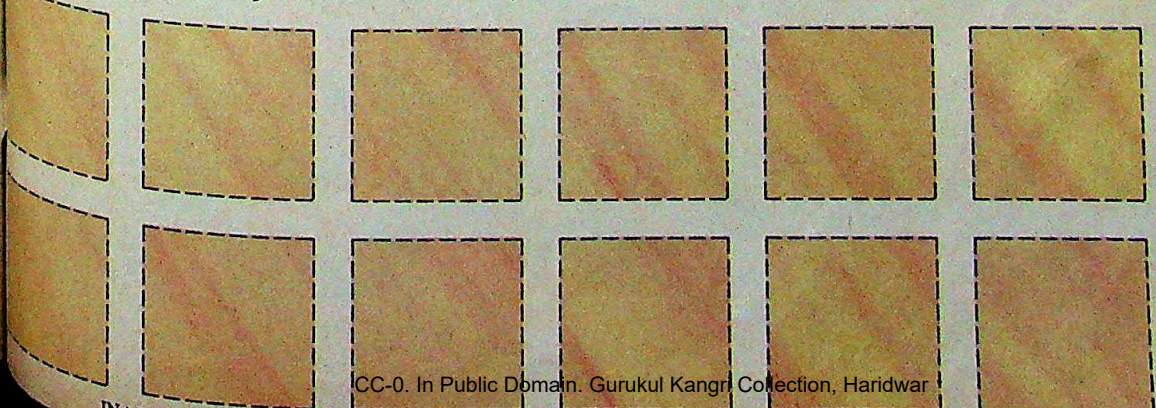
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ERALA

New Pastures

Saudi Arabia may offer jobs

KERALA is being convulsed by a wave of *schadenfreude*. The thousands of Malayalee workers who were forced to leave Kuwait when Iraqi tanks rolled in have lost no time in flocking Gulfwards once again for job opportunities—this time at the expense of the hapless Yemenis working in Saudi Arabia.

The Saudis, angered by the stand taken by the Yemeni Government in the Gulf crisis, have ordered thousands of its citizens to leave the kingdom, thereby creating about six lakh job vacancies which the Malayalees are now hoping to grab.

Their aspirations have, not surprisingly, been given a boost by the Kerala Government. Galvanised into action by the nightmare of coping with the 1,80,000 workers who swarmed home after Iraq invaded Kuwait—the state Government has already approached the concerned officials in the fabulously wealthy kingdom. Their mission is to somehow convince Saudi employers and officials that the expertise which Indian workers had developed over the years by working in the Gulf is an asset that they should take advantage of.

Not that the Saudis needed much convincing. The state government team, led by Labour Commissioner K.P. Joseph, toured the key cities of Riyadh, Jeddah, Akkhobar, Damman and Dahran and found Saudi employers enthusiastic about Indian workers and in particular the Malayalees. In general the Saudi view of Malayalee workers was that they were hard-working, less demanding than other immigrants, quietly apolitical (unlike the 'quarrelsome' Palestinians) and, most important, quick to adapt to Saudi traditions, customs and culture.

At the Saudi Ministry of Health in Riyadh, Joseph heard more good news. The ministry is shortly to launch a large-scale recruitment campaign for doctors, nurses and para-medical staff throughout the country and Malayalee applicants would be favoured above most others.

And the ministry wasn't just making empty promises. A fortnight ago, officials flew to Trivandrum and recruited over a thousand para-medical staff. This, they declared, was simply a foretaste of what was to come.





Sunday Malayalee meeting in pre-Saddam Kuwait; (left) Joseph: back to the future.

Indians cannot, however, expect to grab all the jobs that have been unwillingly vacated by the Yemenis. The Egyptians and Kuwaitis who were displaced by the Gulf crisis are also frontrunners for any jobs going in Saudi Arabia. Moreover, just as the Yemenis have been punished for their government's stance, Keralites are understandably anxious that the continued refusal by the Indian Government to line up behind the West and pressure Iraq to withdraw from Kuwait might eventually rebound on them.

But the general feeling in Kerala is that even if Malayalees are behind the Egyptians and Kuwaitis in the queue for jobs, they can still expect to secure about one lakh of the jobs where vacancies exist.

Furthermore, if the Saudis decide to retaliate against the Sudanese and the Palestinians for their hostile stand in the Gulf crisis, even more jobs might be in the offing.

Not all the Malayalees who were forced to return to Kerala are living out of suitcases in readiness to go to Riyadh. The more optimistic among them are biding their time, in the hope that Kuwait will again become a bonanza country, once the crisis caused by the invasion of Kuwait by Iraq has been resolved. Their optimism is further fuelled by the belief that their particular skills will be required for rebuilding the country's now shattered economy and infrastructure.

Nor is the Kerala Government making the mistake of putting all its eggs into one basket. While it hopes that many of its citizens will be able to relive the Gulf dream—whether in Kuwait or in Saudi Arabia—it is also making a concerted effort to persuade those who have returned to part with their Gulf-earned money and invest it in the state.

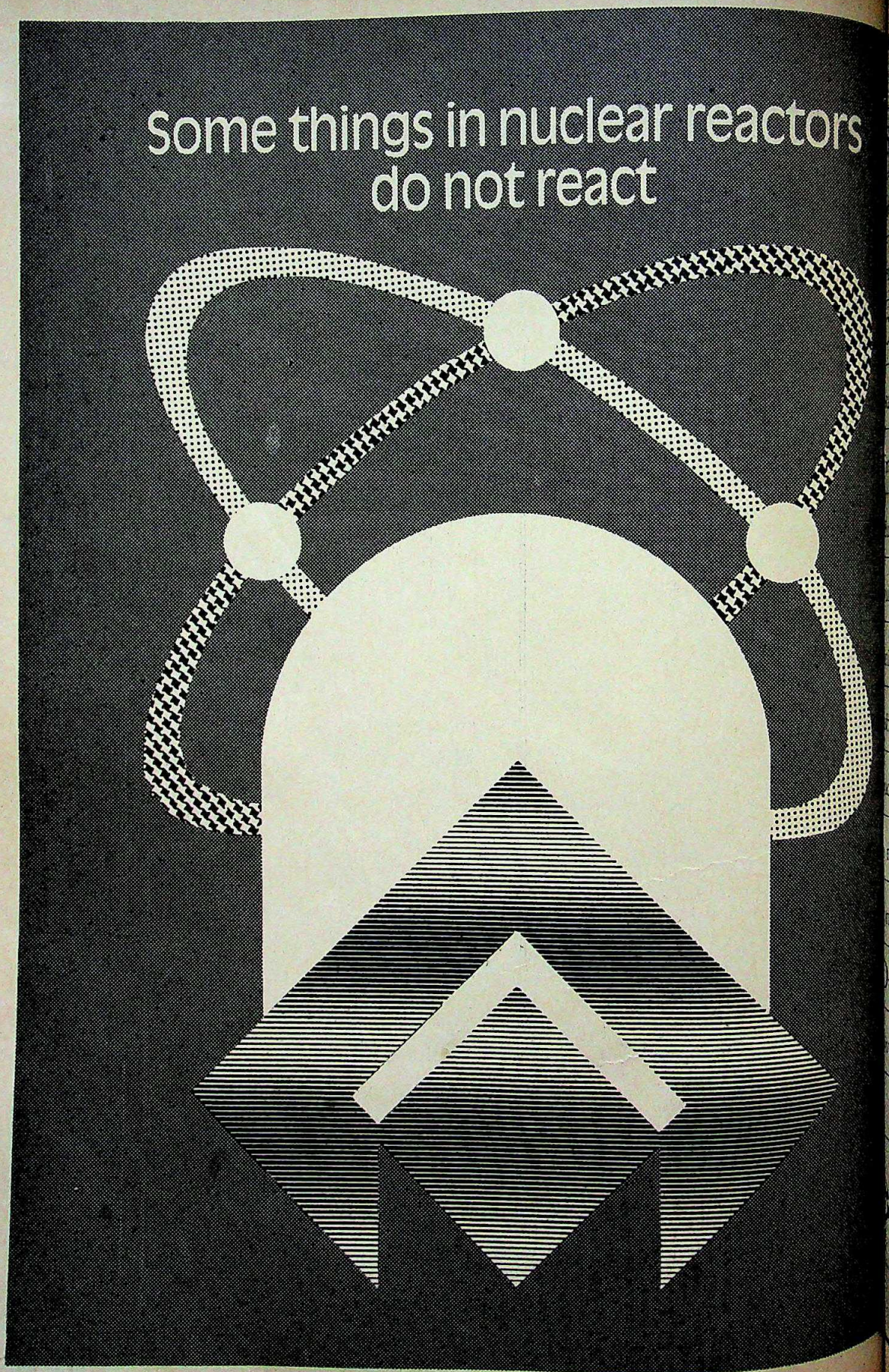
To this end, the Kerala Financial Corporation is bombarding them with details of the generous credit facilities available to entrepreneurs. Budding businessmen have been told that if they want to set up a concern, any application for a loan would be favourably treated and expedited.

But for most Malayalees, staying at home and investing in Kerala is definitely the last resort. The vast majority of those who fled Kuwait are concentrating their efforts on returning to the Middle East. Having tasted the fruits of relative affluence, the Malayalee's Middle East addiction will take a lot more than the invasion of Kuwait to cure.

—RAMESH MENON

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Battered Credibility



WE must thank *The Afternoon Despatch & Courier* of Bombay for taking the growing trend in the Indian press of the primacy of advertising over editorial content to its absurd logical conclusion by giving over the whole of the front page to one advertisement. But the issues exciting the press and the public alike in the past month and more are even more portentous. They affect the credibility and raison d'etre of the press.

There were the students immolating themselves in protest against the partial acceptance of the Mandal Commission report. At first timorously and then more full-throatedly, the cry went out that the press was glorifying immolations. But the immolations were left behind by the gory battles that were fought at Ayodhya, as a politico-religious movement exploited by the BJP was pitted against the might of the state. The important question the event posed was whether the press was fair.

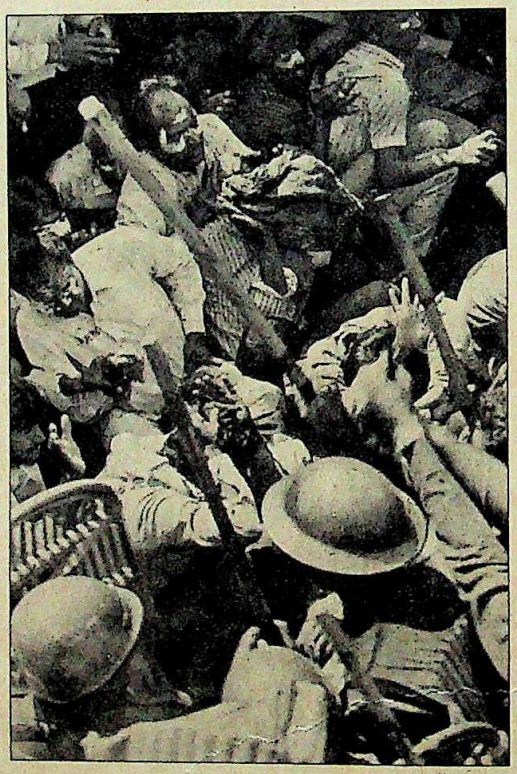
These two issues again highlighted an often forgotten truth. The press cannot be an island unto itself. It is part of the political and social milieu in which it functions. The mettle of the press is tested when passions run high and one's own predilections incline one to favour a point of view.

Many of the Hindi and regional language papers suffered no pangs of conscience. In fact they lustily joined the fray. And how did the English-language press behave?

Two of the newspapers, *The Telegraph* of Calcutta and *The Independent* of Bombay had Muslim reporters who provided a built-in corrective. Among the major newspapers, the *Indian Express* was the most biased in its reporting. *The Hindu* was, more often than not, fair as were *The Statesman* and *The Hindustan Times*. *The Times of India* gave some evidence of news management in the October 30 report before correcting itself by sending reporter Sumir Lal to the scene.

Take the kar sewaks' first assault on the Babri Masjid on October 30. The *Indian Express* reporter claimed: "A major portion of the Babri Masjid here was damaged around noon on Tuesday by kar sewaks who stormed the Babri Masjid-Ram Janmabhoomi complex past security men braving bullets,

Lathicharge on kar sewaks in Ayodhya



The mettle of the press is tested when passions run high and one's background and bias cause one to favour a point of view.

teargas and lathis." Javed Ansari of *The Independent* reported more accurately: "They (kar sewaks) damaged a portion of the front wall besides planting a saffron flag on each of the three domes of the mosque."

But Ansari took the security forces to task. He wrote: "Earlier, the meek surrender of security forces came after waves of kar sewaks and devotees converged at the gates of the Babri Masjid-Ram Janmabhoomi site." The *Hindu* correspondent was somewhat nearer the mark in suggesting: "Opening fire would have been the only way to stop the highly-motivated saints, youths sporting saffron headgear and near hysterical women who charged the disputed site. But that would have been catastrophic."

For Sajeda Momin of *The Telegraph*, "Hindu fundamentalists entered the complex of the Ram Janmabhoomi-Babri Masjid today and damaged the disputed structure. Thousands of frenzied kar sewaks took over the shrine as the state administration and the security forces passively collaborated by remaining mute spectators."

The Times of India report buried the damage to the mosque on an inside page in paragraph 11 of the lead story. A Lucknow-datelined report by its Lucknow correspondent set the stage for the October 30 kar sewa for the *Indian Express*. One could almost hear the war drums. It said: "Defying all restrictions, ignoring the presence of the police and paramilitary forces, braving lathi blows and in some places even bullets, the people virtually rose in revolt..."

The second assault on the Ayodhya complex on November 2 again resulted in varying versions. Two papers seemed to agreed on the nature of firing—"without warning" (*Indian Express*) and "almost unprovoked" (*The Hindu*). Indeed, *The Hindu* man seemed somewhat carried away in suggesting that the firing exercises "appear to be murders of the unarmed people in cold blood". For *The Telegraph* reporter, it was "tough action to keep attackers away from the main site". Here Sumir Lal of *The Times of India* scored in detailing the graduated response of the security forces, repeated tear-gassing, failing to stem the fusillade of brickbats from the roof-tops.

Reporting accurately and objectively on a surcharged issue requires reporters schooled in the norms of good journalism, backed by newspapers which will stand by them.

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Bestsellers

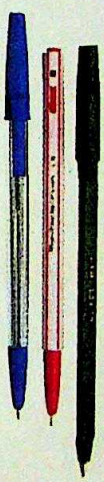
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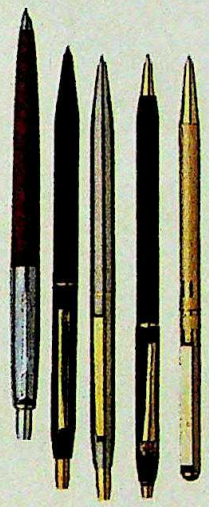


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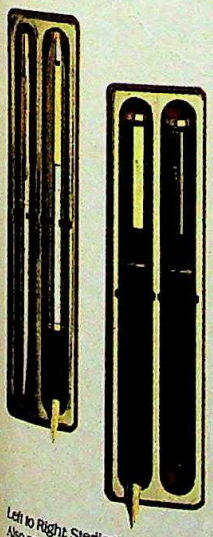
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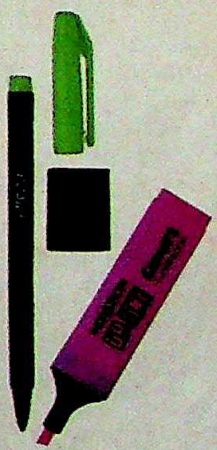
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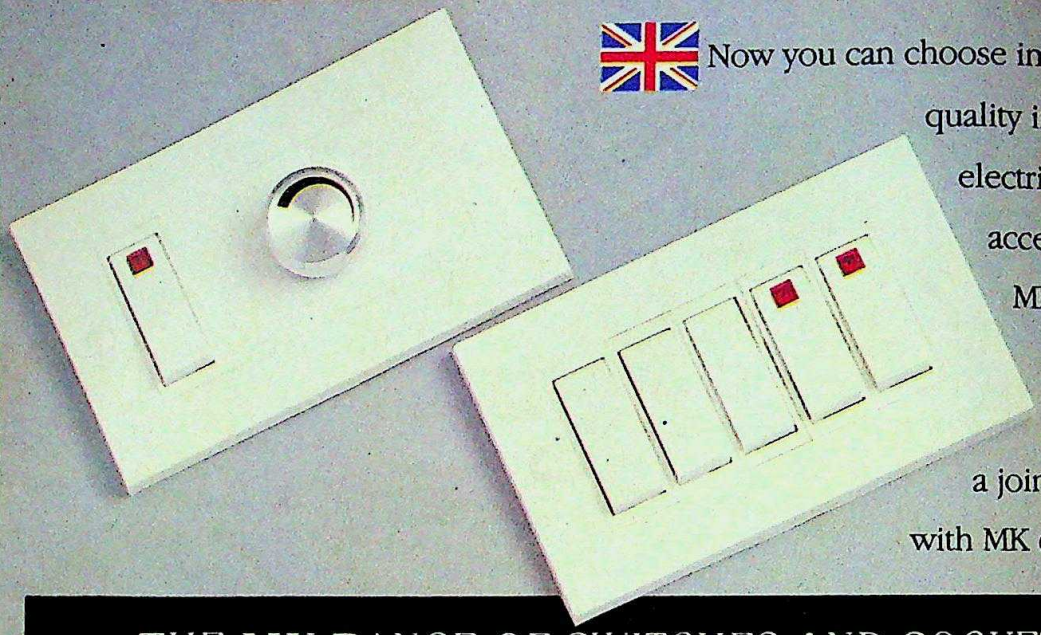
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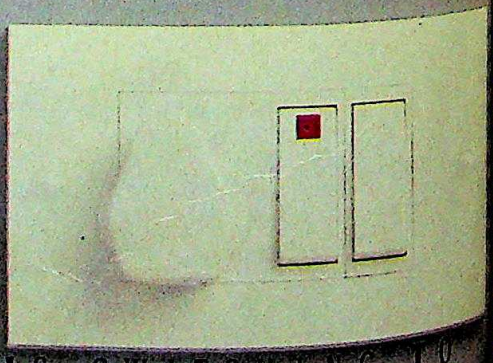


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Torrid Tales

How India is setting for pulp



EARTH QUEEN, SKY KING
by JULIA FITZGERALD
Fontana: Distributed by Rupa & Co
Price: Rs 88; Pages: 365



MOUNTAINS OF THE SUN
by EVELYN HART
Corgi Books
Distributed by IBD
Price: Rs 65; Pages: 479

KIPLING'S East and West have finally met—in the great new kitsch bazaar of pulp fiction. In fact, it's quite an unholy alliance between the Mills and Boon school of writing and Sivakasi calender art. What's happened is that the romance industry ran out of locales for all those unbelievably eligible and desirable heroes and secretly simpering heroines. Remember those jaws (always steely), those chins (always determined), bank accounts (always many-digited). Those blue skies of Cornwall or outbacks of Australia or the harems of vague Middle Eastern kingdoms with rulers from vague evil sultans are being replaced by the heat and dust and lust of the plains of Hindustan—with a generous sprinkling of the homegrown gods. Erotic *deus ex machina*.

Earth Queen, Sky King is by no less a writer than Julia Fitzgerald—crowned 'The Queen of Romance' by the *London Evening Standard* for such literary excesses as *Royal Love, Slave Lady, The Prince and the Pagan*. The present is an example of pulp-fiction at its most unbridled, written in treacly, exclamated and breathless prose. Into it are thrown a princess (Radha) lusting after the sky god Varuna, obscene hermaphrodites, treacherous nawobs (sic), exotic cats who seem to have slipped into this tale from the *Arabian Nights*, love potions with all the mysteries of the East, the inevitable sati, mean-eyed Maharanis who'd make Snow White's stepmother look like, well, Snow White. And to top up this exotically heady cocktail are passages of mushy porn. Until the very end, it's not really clear if the hero's a god or just plain god-like—and did they really do it or was it merely a midsummer night's dream.

Fitzgerald's enthusiasm for the pantheon of Hindu gods and India's historical figures steamroll facts and logic. Hence, Radha's brother is called Zaheer. There's a Maharani Jinnah. Varuna when he's not playing sky god and is down to earth is called Khan Varuna. Perhaps, Fitzgerald's real purpose is national integration.

While the sky's no limit for Fitzgerald's prose, Evelyn Hart in *Mountains of the Sun* has kept the parameters of her love story pegged to ground realities. The heights soaring no further than the mountains of Kashmir. This is a sort of Raj Quartet, continued. The romance is in minor key. The hero, Lawrence Sword, a "dashing" lieutenant in an elite corps of the Indian Army, is called Talwar in this novel set in the last days of the Raj. And he is caught between two women: the seductive, upwardly mobile Monique whom he lusts for and a white Russian orphan Clavdia. The story unfolds against a troubled landscape of riots; the shadow of Partition falls somberly across the protagonists in their pursuit of love. At any rate, love in India is finally turning blockbuster. The Raj lives on.—MADHU JAIN

EXCERPTS

The *nautch* girl had danced for her father in Persian style *shalwar* of lemon gauze, quite transparent so that her sex could be seen quite plainly. Her breasts were rouged, the nipples red as betel juice, and they hung heavily over her wide hips, like the sensual temple carvings of the goddesses making love. She had shaken those wide hips in a way no honest dancer would do, thrusting out her pelvis towards the Maharaja. He was dipping his fingers into a gold bowl taking out pellets of something brownish and popping them onto his tongue.

Tangled Web

Tacky study of Asians in UK



THE GOLDEN THREAD
Asian Experiences of Post-Raj Britain
by ZERBANOO GIFFORD
Grafton: Distributed by Rupa & Co
Price: Rs 245; Pages: 236

BROUGHT to England at the age of three to join her Parsi parents who had left India to make their fortune, Zerbanoo Gifford quickly realised that neither her British education, marriage to an English lawyer nor two parliamentary tickets from the Liberal Party could protect her against the racism and chauvinism that is modern, white Britain.

The Golden Thread is her protest. Neither an outpouring of creative talent nor a stirring social document, *The Golden Thread* is about successful Asian women in Britain and their struggle against prejudice, both racial and sexist in nature.

Gifford is clearly writing for a British audience, the next-door neighbour kind who has to be helped to 'understand' the Asian woman (Gifford's grand euphemism for women of subcontinental origin) and also her heritage.

Hence the numerous over-simplifications which choke this narrative. Like the 'God bless our Asian traditions' theme with which most such books seek to counter ignorant white British prejudice.

So she spends pages enthusing about Zoroastrianism—a religion probably unheard of by the average Briton. Yet is it fear or ignorance which keeps her from adding that a faith which thousands of years ago, respected the human intellect enough to stand for monotheism and light in an age of darkness and superstition is today shackled by blatantly sexist personal laws and customs. Or is it the upper middle class background of all the 'golden girls' in her book that lead them to mouth absurdities like "within Asian culture sex is seen as a blessing rather than a sin". Or "men respect women in India whether she is working or not". And "in many respects

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(From left) Katy Mirza, Playboy bunny; Bapsi Sidhwa, author; and Princess Indira of Kapurthala, famed for her War broadcasts: myriad facets

Asian women see themselves as equal to their men and as natural feminists within their married lives". There are pages and pages of such nonsense. What kind of gilded cages did such birds live in before they came to Britain? Had they functioned even on the fringes of the Indian reality, instead of being cocooned from it, perhaps their first experiences of reality in Britain would have been less painful.

It is to Gifford's credit that she takes pains to point out that however warped and biased British minds may be, the system has an inherent ability to correct some of its worst excesses. When Dadabhai Naoroji was elected as the first Asian to the House of Commons in 1892, the Tory prime minister called him a 'black man'. But Queen Victoria was not amused and another Britisher, Gladstone remarked that compared to the two, Salisbury was 'blacker'. Gifford herself was spat on and called 'nigger lover' when she stood from the reputedly genteel Harrow constituency as a parliamentary candidate. Fed up with the 'uninhibited racial hatred' she finally went public—and was amazed at the sympathetic response of the national media. She is shrewd enough however to add: "They were more interested in my plight and the racism I suffered because I had been educated at a top English school and was married to an Englishman. It was as if the British establishment regarded the matter as an affront to its own dignity and reputation for fair-mindedness, but at least my experiences were listened to and reported fairly."

Many of the women in this book are working in fields very different from those in which most immigrant women find themselves ghettoised. There are several interesting snippets about the dilemmas faced by Asian women in politics, and the varied reactions from their own communities. If only Gifford had given them more space to describe their lives and struggles and treated us to fewer pages of mundane philosophy *The Golden Thread* would have carved its own niche in the plethora of existing literature on this subject.

—SHAHNAZ ANKLESARIA AIYAR

Temporary Trillings

Flashes of talent smothered by inferior craft and triteness



MY WORLD
by TABISH KHAIR
New Poetry;
Rupa & Co
Price: Rs 40; Pages: 72



THE SERENE FLAME
by MAKARAND PARANJAPE
New Poetry;
Rupa & Co
Price: Rs 40; Pages: 81

SAMUEL Johnson in his *Dictionary* defined Grubstreet as the name of a street near Moorsfield, London, "much inhabited by writers of small histories, dictionaries, and temporary poems". For producing lots of the last, it is there, that Tabish Khair and Makarand Paranjape belong. But temporary is not to be equated with dross. In their first collections—part of the launch of a well-produced new poetry imprint—the two poets do flash talent on the occasion, even if only to ultimately impair it with inferior craft and triteness.

Khair's *My World* displays a sensibility, but is overwhelmed by the angst that characterises 'preliminary' poetry, as evident in 'Durkheim', 'After Work', and 'Clocks'. He is clearly driven by the poetic impulse, and produces the occasionally brilliant image—"There are hills near my house, wearing a halo of eagles" and "Everyone is silent; the pond still as glass/ A heron upon one leg"—but tends to end up in the clumsy irony of the last stanzas of 'Calcutta' or the prosaic summations of 'The Magi', 'She', 'Roads', 'Cats and Dogs', and others. 'My India Diary', with its staccato lines and fragmentary imagery, is his best poem, and is reminiscent of Arun Kolatkar's 'Jejuri'.

Paranjape's *The Serene Flame* is a votive offering to his wife, a consecration of their—inevitably—turbulent relationship. The love song of Paranjape dabbles in the classical attributes: passion, anger, resignation, resurgence, memory. But the treatment is far from classic: the form is free and the poems straggle. A pious soppiness keeps seeping in, unleavened by irony and unexalted by a searing passion. Juvenile symbolism destroys 'Treadmill'; lack of irony does the same to 'Proposal'; a silly ending wipes out 'The Third'; and triteness accounts for 'In Love' and many others.

Yet all is not disaster. With its fine use of detail, 'The Magic Lantern' works well, as does 'Walls' with some evocative images. The refrain of 'College Days' has distant echoes of James Fenton's master love lyric 'Nothing', but finally proves too bland in the telling, devoid as it is of Fenton's superb metre and rhyme.

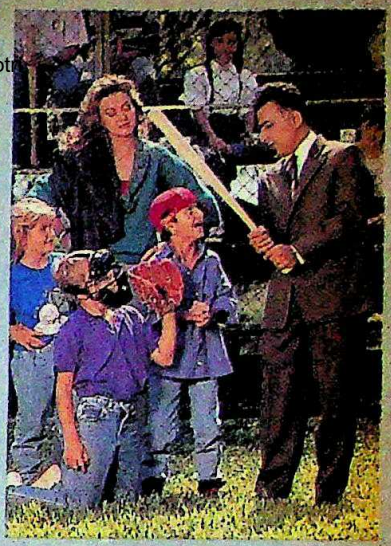
As if anticipating criticism, in a pre-emptive strike, the poet doles out apologia in a prologue and epilogue, declaring: "There's nothing great about these poems." There is really no harm in taking his word on this.

—TARUN J. TEJPAL

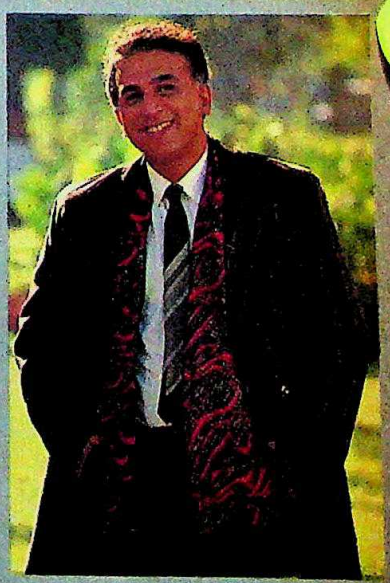
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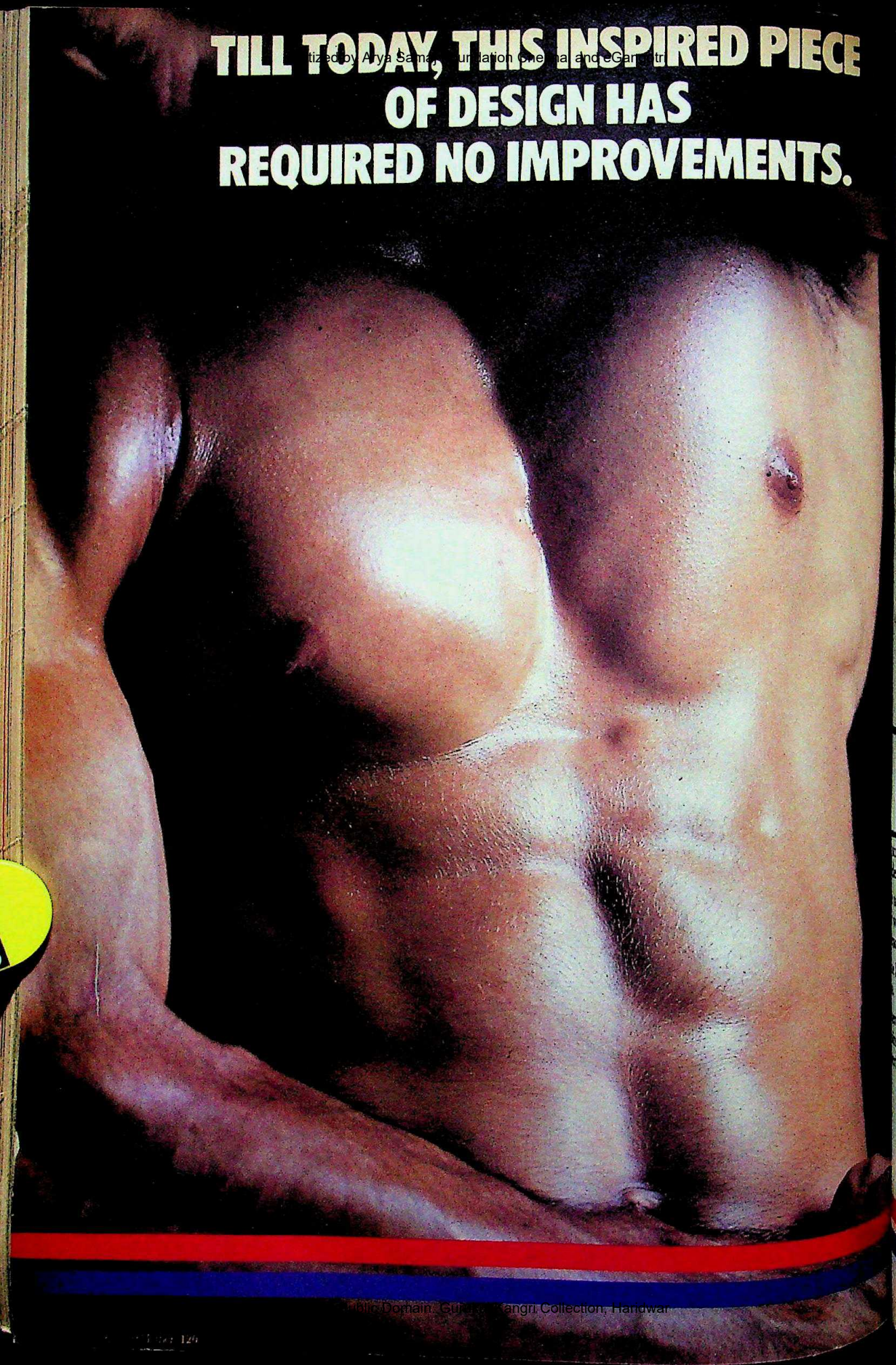
THE CHOICE OF LEADING FASHION HOUSES INTERNATIONALLY

AHMEDABAD: Apurva & Co. • **BARODA:** Shahco Traders • **SURAT:** Shri Dinesh Textile Traders • **AJMER:** Vardhman Textiles • **JAIPUR:** Sheel Son • **JODHPUR:** Jhankar Sons.

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NEITHER HAS THIS.



he other day, the man from Continental Aktiengesellschaft was here.

Stern, hawk-eyed and very German, he earns his ...ckely by designing car tyres for ...es Benz.

...ook one long look (a full six hours ...atch) at the R-90 and, ...cteristically, broke into a grin. ...R-90 had come through with flying ...

...e wasn't one air bubble in evidence, ...gle hairline crack. The contours ...fect. The sipes even more so.

The square-shouldered design gave the R-90 a distinct air of confidence, of quiet strength. The grooves, set deep, promised a stronger grip at high speeds over rain-swept highways and dusty, winding country roads.

When, finally, the man from Continental test-drove on the R-90, what did he have to say?

You're right. He said exactly what lakhs of car-owners have always believed about the R-90.

"It's a miracle!"

R90 EXECUTIVE
Car Tyre

A MIRACLE OF DESIGN.

MODI RUBBER LIMITED

Modi Tyres

MODI RUBBER LIMITED

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Dev Anand and Ananya

Another Stunner

◆ Really, Dev Anand has it all: an ever-lasting youth, as well as pretty young women around him. And now he is going to make *Sau Crore* as well. The oldest young man in Hindi films, is making another original film about politics and murder. That too with a double beauty queen thrown in: Ananya Mukherjee, Miss New York and Miss New Jersey. An engineering graduate, she has cut two discs already. "She's going to be big," says godfather Dev who has already given the world Zeenie and Teenie.

Brawn Sahib

◆ From punch and judo to a double platinum disc for his *Mohabbat Zindabad*, Gurdas Mann, 35, has come a long way. But even though a black belt in karate turned into Punjab's biggest pop star, he had a secret, unfulfilled dream—"to somehow act in Hindi films". Recently the wish came true. Gurdas signed his first few Hindi films—opposite dusky heroine Deepti Naval, arch-rival Malkiat Singh of *tutak tutak* fame, as well as a horror film where he will be battling a spirit. Says the leading Mann-to-be: "Now, there is one heroine who I would like to act with most of all—Rekha." Even brawn sahibs have a heart.



Gurdas Mann: on to cellulo

Calling all Women

◆ The 1981 census got it all wrong: it missed out the *ayahs* and the *dhobans* and millions of other working women. This time round, Asha Bhonsle and Priya Tendulkar will be reaching out to all these hidden statistics in the Indian economy through a short TV film made by Ninia Singh. Both have worked free for the film that will be shown from December 1. "It's the best cause I'm singing for," says Bhonsle. Says Rajani who must be sick and tired of promoting gas lighters on TV: "I've always felt for the equality of women." Ragpickers, *dhobans*, seamstresses: women of India, unite and declare your bit in the GNP.



Cartoon by AJIT NINAN

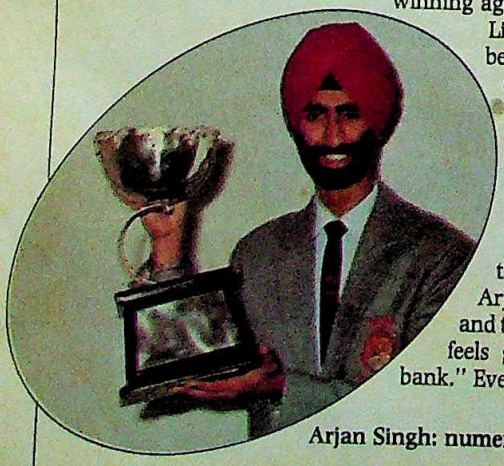
Mother and Hero

◆ Milla, Milla, M
Everywhere he went, fo
ball-crazy Calcutta
mobbed Roger Milla, 38,
hero of Italia '90 who wa
the city with the Diam
Football Club to play in
Mohun Bagan Centena
Gold Cup last week. Even
the swimming pool. "I
overwhelmed at the rec
tion I have received," s
Milla who also had Mo
Teresa praying for him. A
his game was a disappoi
ment. But then, the sta
human after all: he s
Hindi movies (with Fre
subtitles) and "my favou
is Amitabh Bachchan". W
naturally, superstars only
for superstars!

Milla with Mother Ter

Squashing 'em All

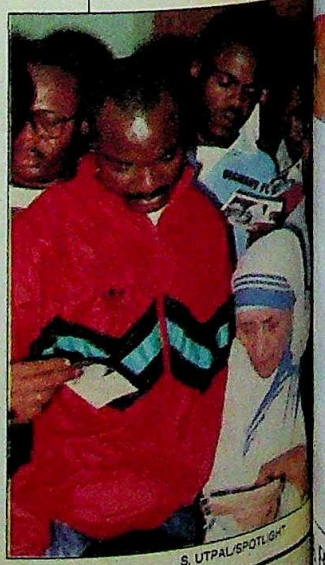
◆ It looked like it was going to be a walkover. At the INDIA TODAY Masters Squash Championship, held last fortnight, defending champion Ravinder Malik, 28, was winning again. Two love.



Arjan Singh: numero uno for Today

Lieutenant Arjan Singh, 22, came from behind. A lean, mean, fighting machine, the 6 ft 3 in tall army officer turned the match neatly around making Malik wish: "If only I had had a few rough games in the beginning, I would have been better off." Two each.

After a tense decider, with the two players fighting neck-to-neck, Arjan Singh walked away with the title and the Rs 10,000 prize booty, smiling: "It feels good to have some money in the bank." Even if one has to sweat for it.



S. UTPAL/SPOTLIGHT

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Wills Filter set the filter trend in cigarettes long years ago. Today it's still the finest. In taste; in satisfaction. Hand-picked virginia tobaccos married to an efficient filter make it so. Millions of smokers have discovered it, then stayed with it.



HTA 3987

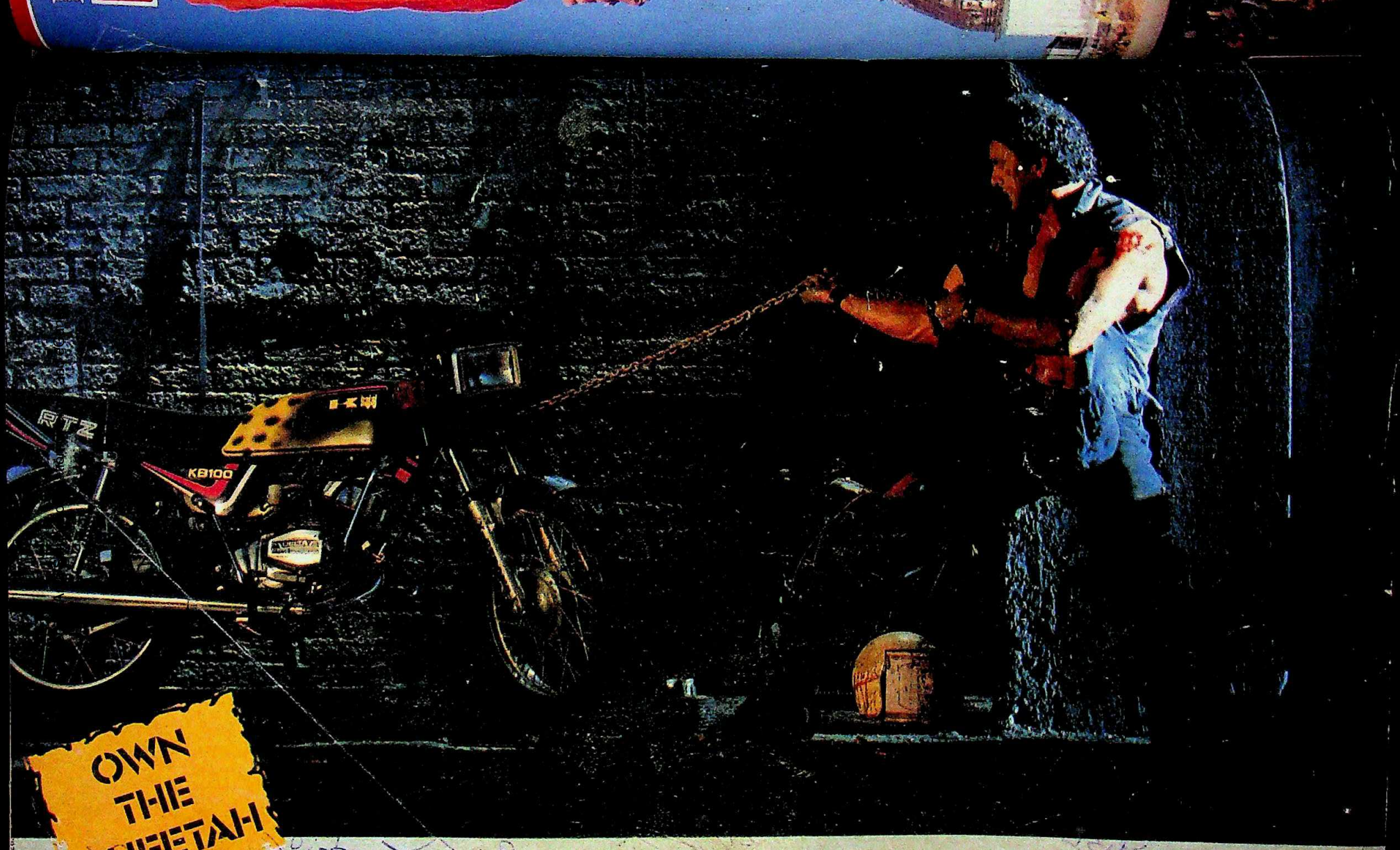
WILLS
FILTER

Filter and tobacco perfectly matched

BRAND OWNED BY ITC LTD.
MADE IN INDIA

STATUTORY WARNING
CIGARETTE SMOKING IS INJURIOUS TO HEALTH

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For all its power and style, the Cheetah is remarkably easy to own. You can ride out on one for a down-payment as low as Rs.3000. And it runs lean on fuel too: 55 kmpl*.
The Cheetah awaits. What's stopping you?

*Under normal conditions.

Kawasaki
RTZ

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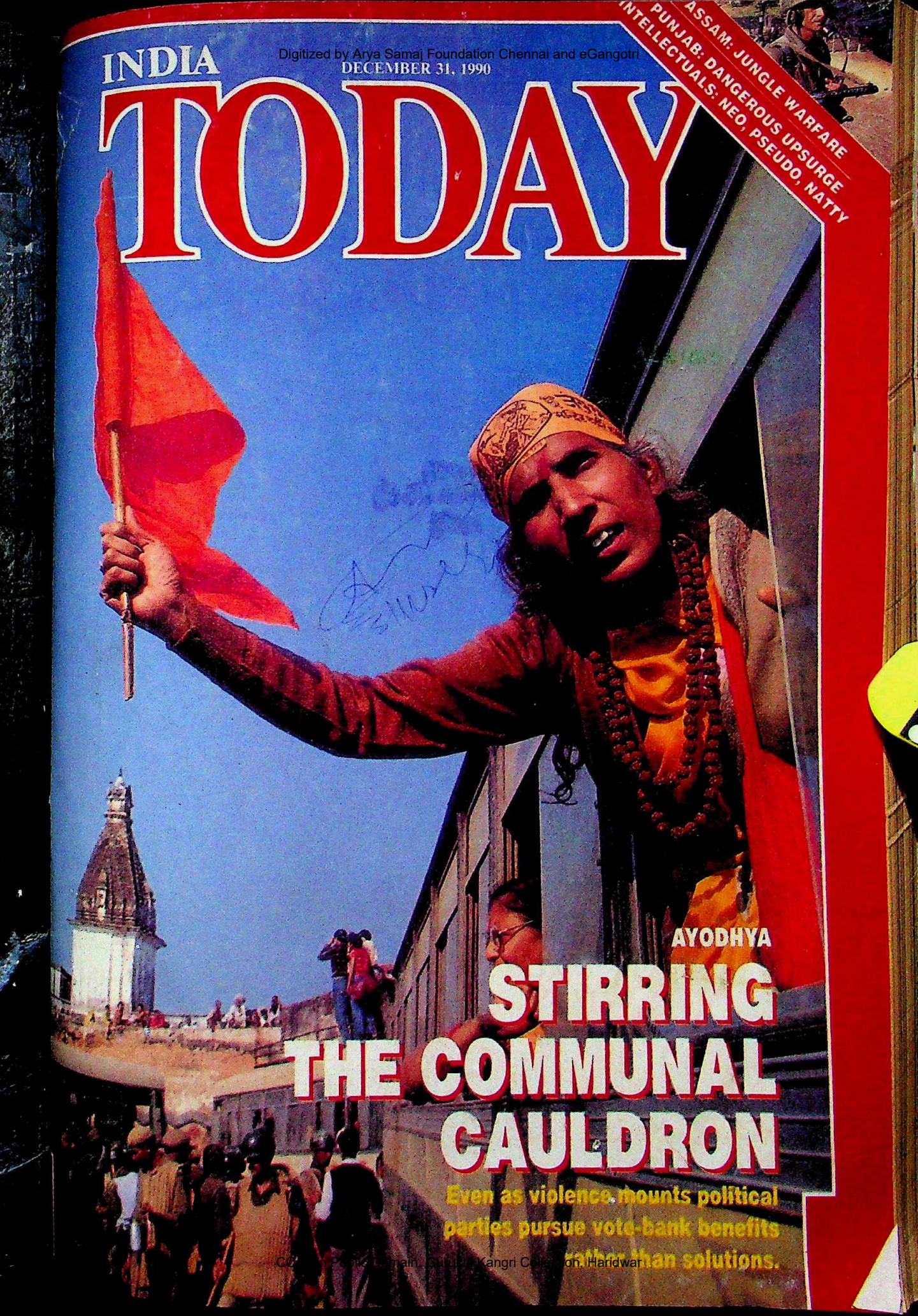
INDIA
DECEMBER 31, 1990

TODAY

ASSAM: JUNGLE WARFARE

PUNJAB: DANGEROUS UPSURGE

INTELLECTUALS: NEO, PSEUDO, NATTY



AYODHYA

STIRRING THE COMMUNAL CAULDRON

Even as violence mounts political parties pursue vote-bank benefits rather than solutions.

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Live Life Kingsize
in gold-edged luxury



All the taste, all the way

STATUTORY WARNING: CIGARETTE SMOKING IS INJURIOUS TO HEALTH

FOCUS THIS FORTNIGHT

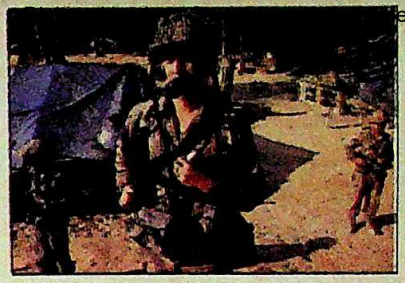
Chennai and eGangotri



Exploiting the Issue

Ayodhya, for the political parties is a ...ind tool with which they hope to lever ...emselves into office. Depending on their ...e, it is being postponed, rushed, fudged, ...led, or left to simmer. An in-depth ...alysis of the parties' long-term strategies ...d the possible solutions.

COVER STORIES 82



State of Strife

Operation Bajrang has momentarily shattered the strongholds of the ULFA, but the future remains uncertain. The army is faced with the prospect of a longer stay. The AGP is on the defensive, and the Congress(I) is being accused of having a hand in the imposition of the President's Rule.

SPECIAL REPORT 22



Dangerous Upsurge

The killings in Punjab have registered a sudden spurt, which has triggered off panic migrations. The media too is being intimidated. Meanwhile the Centre is desperately groping for options, which include the replacement of the governor, the chief secretary and the chief of police.

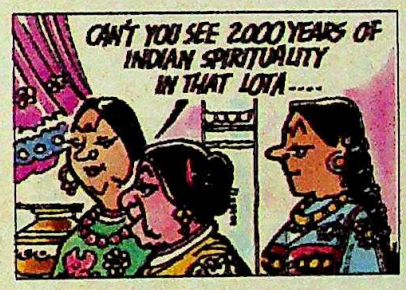
SPECIAL REPORT 29



The Bofors Bind

The controversial Swedish field-gun with ...labyrinthine trail of who the real benefi...aries are, is back in action. There has been ...ogress in the Swiss courts, but machina...ns back in India—resulting in some court ...m melodrama—may jeopardise the fu...e progress of the investigations.

SPECIAL REPORT 39



Neo, Pseudo, Natty

Yuppiedom has hit the Indian intellectual. He's come out of the ivory tower he used to inhabit and pushed away the pedestal he used to perch on. You'll find him dashing around in a Maruti, nattily dressed, giving instant quotes and tailoring his views to fit whatever fashion requires.

SPECIAL FEATURE 145



Return of the Godman

The advent of Chandra Shekhar has marked the return of the high-flying international operator, Chandraswami. Though charged with FERA violations, the controversial swamy is busy meddling with the Ayodhya crisis. In an exclusive interview, he answers the many charges against him.

INTERVIEW 138

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Cover photograph by PRAMOD PUSHKARNA

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Survival skills for an age of physical fitness

Sometime in their late twenties, most Indian males go through a curious rite of passage.

It's called 'settling down in life.'

The first indications that the process has begun are usually physical.

FIGHTING FIT

The muscles grow softer from disuse. The washboard stomach slips into a neat rotundity.

It's the first sign of prosperity. And the worst is yet to come.

Lean fighting machine

How long has it been since you could climb up the stairs to work without running out of wind?

If yawning is your idea of physical labour now, it's time to face the facts: fitness isn't a fad, it's an imperative of the times.

And you need to muster up all the skills at your disposal to survive.

Offence, not defence

When it comes to exercise, it's best to lead the attack.

If you work out only when you need to budge a stubborn inch, you aren't likely to achieve much. Three months after you give up your routine, you may find yourself running to flab again.

It makes sense to ch
exercise activity that ca
into a regular habit. A
workout may benefit y
than bursts of strenuous

Streamlining strat

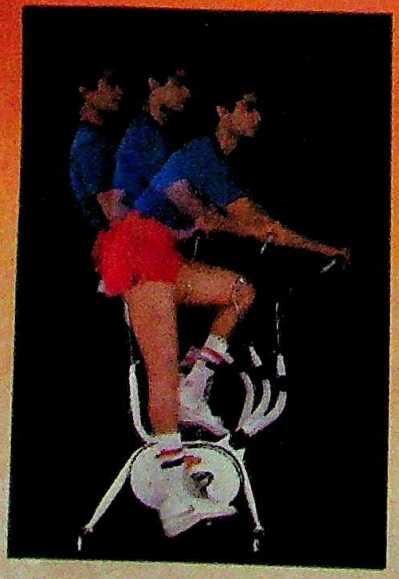
Sports are a good way t
into shape. You may, how
a workout machine like
Allegro (see box) both a
choice and a useful supp

It's important to *ease*
into any routine, and
gradually increase the e
duration of exercise.

A workout machine a
to p
g
stepping
and
setting
g

Keeping tabs on your p
becomes that much e

For those restricted t
so-great indoors, it's obv
most convenient solution



Choose your weapon

For the Battle of the Bulge, it's the ultimate weapon.

With equipment simulating the actions of cycling and rowing, the Hero Allegro is more than an exercise bike.

It's a complete workout machine: the first of its kind in

Time and tension controls allow you to *plan* your exercise. Clocking the time you put in and the distance you cover.

Choose the Hero Allegro. And get fighting fit.

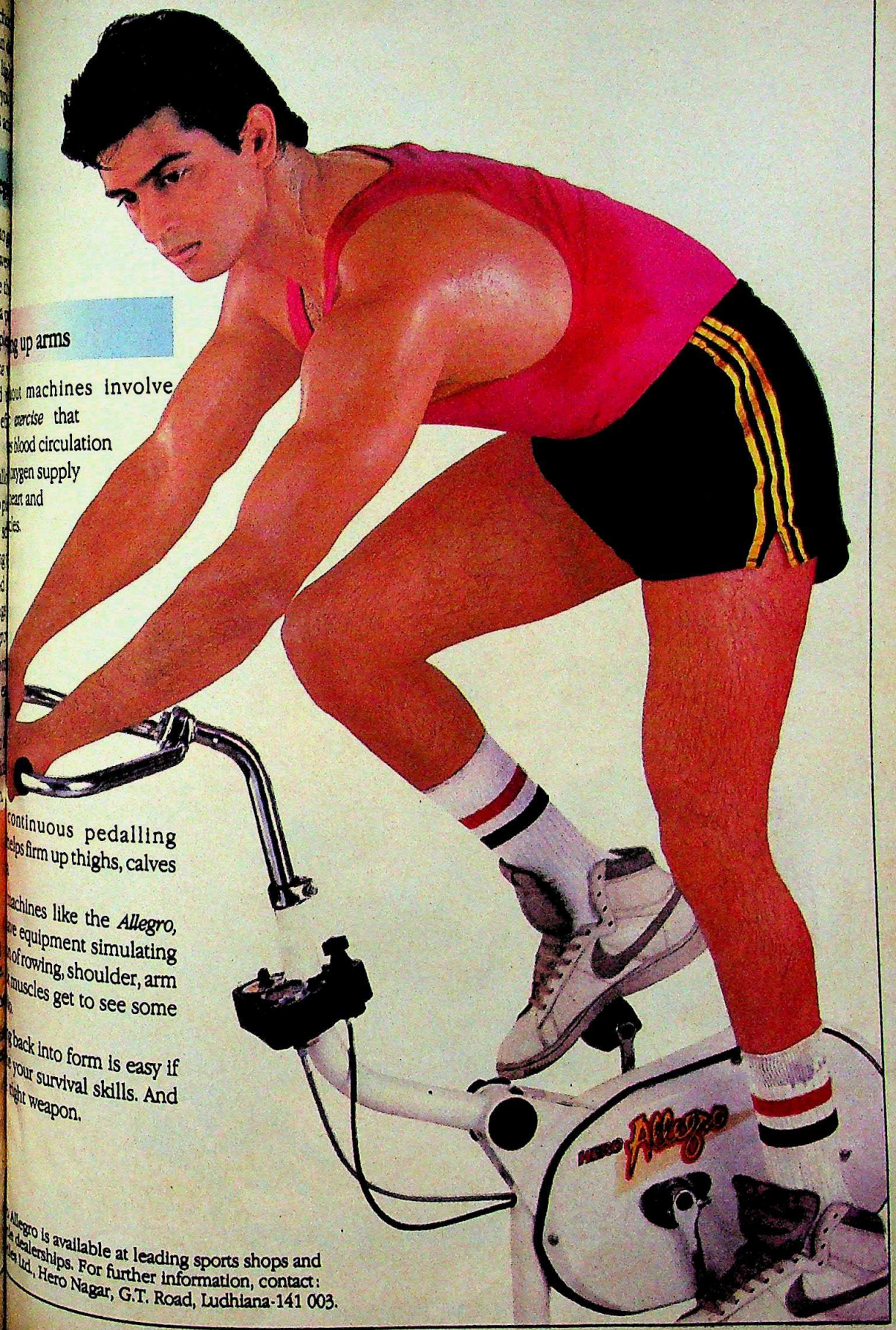
HERO Allegro

The Complete Workout Machine

HTA 6914A

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g up arms

ut machines involve
exercise that
blood circulation
ygen supply
eart and
cles.

continuous pedalling
elps firm up thighs, calves

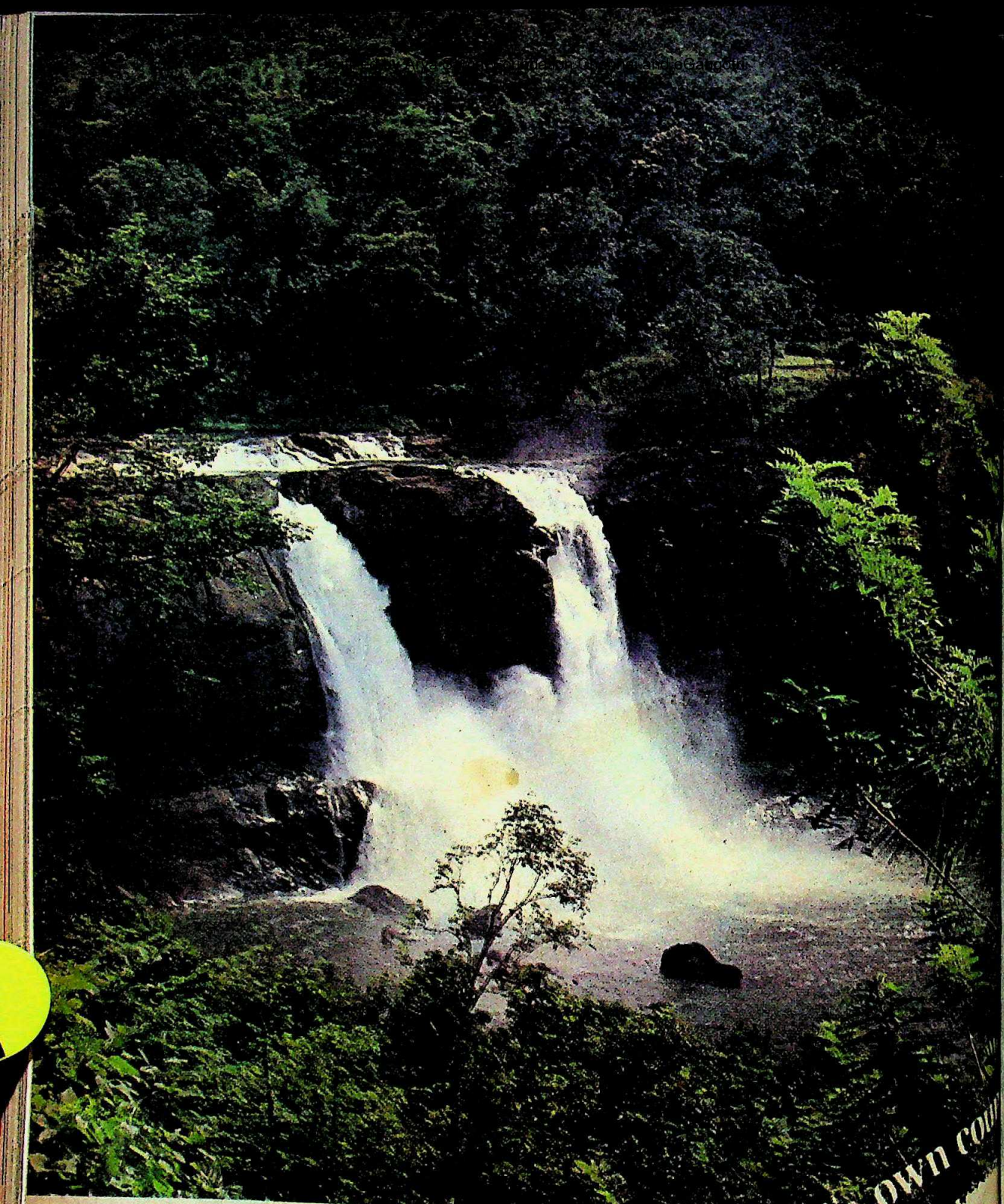
achines like the *Allegro*,
e equipment simulating
of rowing, shoulder, arm
muscles get to see some

back into form is easy if
your survival skills. And
ight weapon.

Allegro is available at leading sports shops and
e dealerships. For further information, contact:
ero Ltd., Hero Nagar, G.T. Road, Ludhiana-141 003.

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Athirampally Waterfalls, Chalakkudy.

How can a land be so impossibly green?

Kerala Tourism, Park View, Thiruvananthapuram-695 033, Kerala, India. Phone : 0471-61132. Telex : 0435-336 KTDC IN.

kerala

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NO LAUGHING MATTER

The present political situation ("Playing the Double Game", December 15) makes one recall an American joke with suitable modification: Rajiv proved that anyone can be the prime minister. V.P. Singh proved that it might be dangerous to have a prime minister. Chandra Shekhar is proving we don't need a prime minister.

J.RENGARAJAN
Madras

WHITHER PEOPLE'S POWER?

I don't know how long the politicians' smiles will last ("How Long Will The Smiles Last", November 30). But as long as they laugh we cannot even smile and nor can democracy hope to take roots.

S.A. SRINIVASA SARMA
Coimbatore

■ The internal feud of the Janata Dal is reflected in this couplet: *Iss ghar ko aag lag gayee ghar ke chirag se.* (This house was burnt by its own inmates.)

BALBIR SINGH BHASIN
Patna Saheb

■ There was a trial in Parliament on November 7. The accused: V.P. Singh. The charge: principled politics. The complainants: Rajiv, Advani, Devi Lal and Chandra Shekhar. Verdict: guilty. It is sad that this injustice was done to an honest man.

VASUDEV NAVANI
Bombay

UNFAIR ACCUSATION

Your sweeping generalisation of the RSS workers ("Secular Doublespeak", Comment, November 30) as rabid is unfair. The RSS consists of some of the finest minds who are well anchored in the essence of *Bharatiya sanskriti* and are exerting their utmost to reinstate the self-righting mechanisms of Hindu society which suffered during centuries of alien rule.

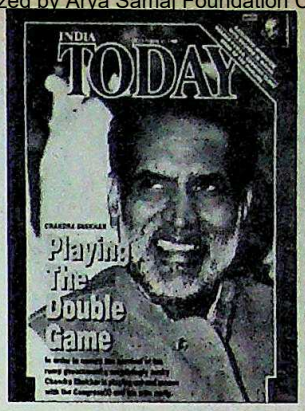
Commander B.K. JAYASWAL (retd)
Ghaziabad

■ No other political party except the BJP has had the courage to expose the so-called secularists who for the last 43 years have been appeasing the minorities. Even though the editorial accepts the fact, the language is satirical.

YOGENDRA SWARUP
Kanpur

■ It has become a fashion to talk about secularism without giving due recognition to the debatable points. Has a debate ever resulted in acceptance of simple facts? Does the fact that an upper caste man may also be poor and in need of help from the society need a debate? I don't think so. Debates prove futile and so people respond to agitational programmes like Rath Yatra.

YASHODHAR VAIDYA
Valsad, Gujarat



Is a prime minister who zigs and zags better than one who flips and flops or even one who wheels and deals?

Bombay — PRABHAT S. VAIDYA

Now that we have for the first time a record number of three living ex-prime ministers, an association of ex-prime ministers should be formed in order to rehabilitate them.

New Delhi — SANKARAN K. IYER

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FOR THE FORTNIGHT DECEMBER 16-31, 1990

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IN A DIFFERENT CLASS

To compare Kanshiram with Ram Vilas Paswan, Meera Kumar and Buta Singh ("The Race is On", November 30) is like comparing Mahatma Gandhi with Rajiv Gandhi, Sanjay Gandhi and Maneka Gandhi. As the leaders would themselves acknowledge they are as different from each other as lions are from cats. Kanshiram is not a product of party politics but of the social reform movement.

VISHAL MANGALWADI
Mussoorie

CONTRADICTORY VIEWS

It is wrong to put the entire blame for biased reporting on the regional press ("Panic Press", November 30) as the English press is also guilty of doing the same. They ignored the VHP rally on November 7 and the removal of the *Chhatri* from the shilanyas site. And the reported massacre of kar sewaks in Ayodhya, which according to your correspondent was blown out of proportion, has now been found to be true by a commission. It is therefore the Hindi press rather than the English one which has its finger on the pulse of the people.

J.B. KUMAR
Ranchi

■ I am a resident of the riot hit area of Patna city and without being biased against any community would like to say that the communal clashes, which occurred in my area, were pre-planned by a particular community. It is absurd to say that they were a result of inflammatory articles published in the Hindi press.

SANJAY KUMAR
Patna

■ The recent whipping up of communal passions in Bihar was a direct result of the emotionally charged articles written in the Hindi press. Most of the people are semi-literates and read only the Hindi papers. Thus the editors of these papers also share the responsibility for the loss of lives during the communal riots.

SANJAY. K. DWIVEDI
Patna

DOGMATIC ATTITUDE

It is one thing to deny the women who marry outside their community the right to practise their faith ("A Crisis of Identity", November 30), and another to heap unjustified abuse on them. Why is not the Parsi man similarly condemned? And Bapsy Dastur's analogy to M.F. Husain coming barefoot to Bombay's Willingdon Club is misplaced, for by no stretch of imagination can a social club be compared with a faith. The Parsi community is fast dwindling and it is the dogmatic attitude of

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people like Dastoor Kotwal and Bapsy Dastur that will speed its extinction.

Calcutta — KERSASP NAVAL DASTUR

■ From your article one gets the impression that all that was discussed at the All India Zoroastrian Youth Festival was Roxan Shah's case. I was a delegate at the festival and would like to point out that varied topics were discussed with just a passing reference to Roxan's case. Your article also says the youth were angry that the community had denied Roxan her death rights. However, most of them did not even know about the case and, when given a detailed explanation by eminent speakers, were quite convinced that the dealing of the case was absolutely justified.

Patiala — SANAEA K. ANTIA

TIMELY EXPOSURE

Your exposure of the scientific community ("Distorted Priorities", November 30) is timely. Nehru will be turning in his grave at the utter uselessness of the modern temples, as the laboratories are referred to. At seminars, scientists present high-sounding mostly replicated western ideas and make claims of indigenous knowhow in the fields of energy, pollution control and others. They publicise their revolutionary findings on simple gadgets but fail to give details about them. France, which has practically no villages, was once asked to collaborate on rural water supply schemes! The tax paying public has a right to know the truth about these laboratories.

Guntakal — G. EKAMBARAM

UNIMPRESSIVE SHOW

V.P. Singh's televised address to the nation on October 22 ("Cry Beloved Country", November 15) failed to impress the viewers. Instead, it exposed the hollowness in his appeal and conveyed the impression of his being the ablest actor-politician in the country. For his remarkable performance his name must be proposed for the Oscar award which has been still eluding Indian actors.

Sugauli, Bihar — TAPAN K. SARKAR

Rajiv was voted out of power by the people, and V.P. Singh was voted out by Rajiv. It is only in India that the opposition leader appoints the prime minister.

Germany — MATHEW PUTHUSSERRIL

SUNIL MALHOTRA/Reuters



These lines sum up your treatment of Rajiv:
About my character I hear, So many vile complaints;
I am the only sinner, In a world of perfect saints.

Calcutta — ARABINDA BOSE

YEARS OFF THE MARK

Your interview with the Governor of the Reserve Bank of India, R.N. Malhotra ("Changing Role", November 15) mentions his age as 69. He is 64.

Bombay — ARVIND BHANDARI

NOT OUR NAME

Our name is Zewar Exports Private Limited and not Zawars as mentioned in your fashion feature ("Fake but Fabulous", November 15) and our price range starts from Rs 38 and not from Rs 300. Also, your correspondent has got the location of the boutiques Aura and Legend interchanged. While Legend is on Chowpatty, Aura is on Altamount Road.

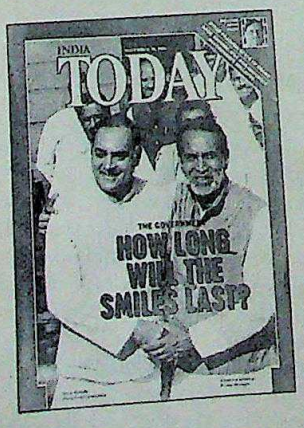
Bombay — JAMINI AHLUWALIA

INCORRECT STATEMENT

In your article on the Indian Navy ("Succession Storm", October 31, 1990) you have incorrectly written that "Ramdas' three daughters are green card holders". In fact, I and my two sisters hold an H-1, a J-1 and an F-1 visa respectively—all non-immigrant. Secondly, my husband Zulfiqar Ahmad's specialisation is South Asia and not "comparative studies of the Soviet Union" as you have stated.

Chicago, US — KAVITA N. RAMDAS

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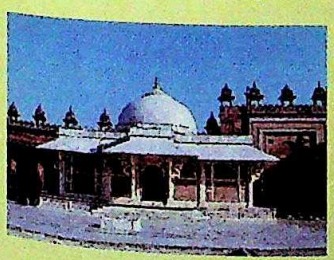
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Baroda	Vadodara**	999*	—
Bombay	SeaRock Sheraton	2099/1899*	—
Jodhpur	Umaid Bhawan Palace	1599	—
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Mangalore	Manjarun**	599	—

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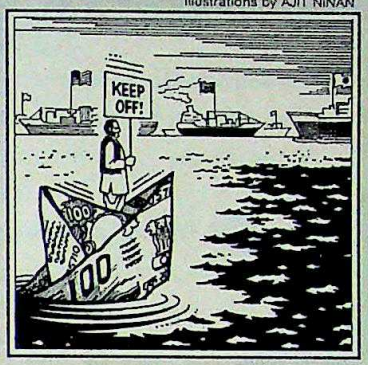
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Open up the Markets

Illustrations by AJIT NINAN



THROUGHOUT the world, pragmatic market-oriented policies aimed at achieving a better, consumer-oriented standard of living, are sounding the death-knell of ideological economic fundamentalism. This development is being propelled by a new breed of statesman—the ecopolitician—who provides not just political, but more importantly, practical economic leadership.

Five years ago, Rajiv Gandhi seemed to belong to this genre. He appeared to recognise the challenges posed by the growing globalisation of the world economy and attempted, however shakily, to make India a part of this trend. But all that was overtaken by political developments and India, alas, retreated into the familiar Hindu Rate of Development—the economic masochism of self-imposed fetters to growth.

Faced with an unprecedented economic crisis and forced into more commercial and institutional borrowing, India seems doggedly determined not to learn from the successful strategies its neighbours are pursuing. Increasingly, developing nations are viewing foreign equity not only as the harbinger of modern technology so essential for boosting exports but also the cheapest way of obtaining hard currency. Ask China, which is now netting in $2 billion (Rs 36 billion) a year in investments as against India's $200 million. Direct foreign investment in China now totals $22.7 billion, India's $0.5 billion. China's industrial growth rate, at more than 12 per cent, is ahead of India's. Indonesia (which drew $4.7 billion in foreign investments last year), South Korea, Thailand, Malaysia, which once lagged behind India, have forged way ahead.

India has simply failed to produce leaders with a pragmatic, world-oriented, economic vision. To hear them talk leads to the impression that the entire world is simply craving to invest here and that by resisting their overtures or red-taping their designs, India is valiantly resisting the onslaught of neo-imperialism.

That's hogwash. India's image abroad has taken such a battering that investors are simply shying away. Facing a crippling shortage of foreign exchange and with its share of the world trade dipping to less than one-half per cent of the total, India is missing the boat. For the economic giants there are far more attractive pastures. The US is looking at Mexico, Brazil and Argentina. The European Community is looking at East Europe and the Soviet Union. Japan's looking at China and South Asia. And India is looking more and more like Myanmar.

The Terror Mounts



COMPARED to the havoc now sweeping Punjab the pre-Blue Star and post-Black Thunder days were a Sunday school picnic. With about 40 killings a day by terrorist death squads, the authority of the state barely exists.

Killers freely roam villages in border districts imposing taxes, extorting money and rations, kidnapping for ransom, and marking off territories under their occupation—their "government", really—by patrolling in open jeeps. And the arsenal of weapons at their command, courtesy Pakistan, gets more formidable by the day. Kalashnikovs are old hat. Today, they sport anti-tank guns, rocket-propelled grenades, a handful of Stinger missiles, and undetectable plastic anti-tank mines.

And the security forces find their resolve weakened. Elements of the Border Security Force, intelligence officials admit, have been compromised by the rich profits of the gun smuggling trade and have failed to check the influx of weapons from Pakistan. The Central Reserve Police Force is under criticism for its lacklustre performance against Punjab's hit squads.

This, combined with a corrupt and effete administration, and the utter failure of the Centre to evolve either a cohesive administrative or political policy towards the state have simply made the extremists bolder. Now they issue edicts to the state Government—a code of conduct for officials demanding that they issue circulars in Gurumukhi, or reserve special chairs on Punjabi in various colleges—that it may disobey only at a bloody cost.

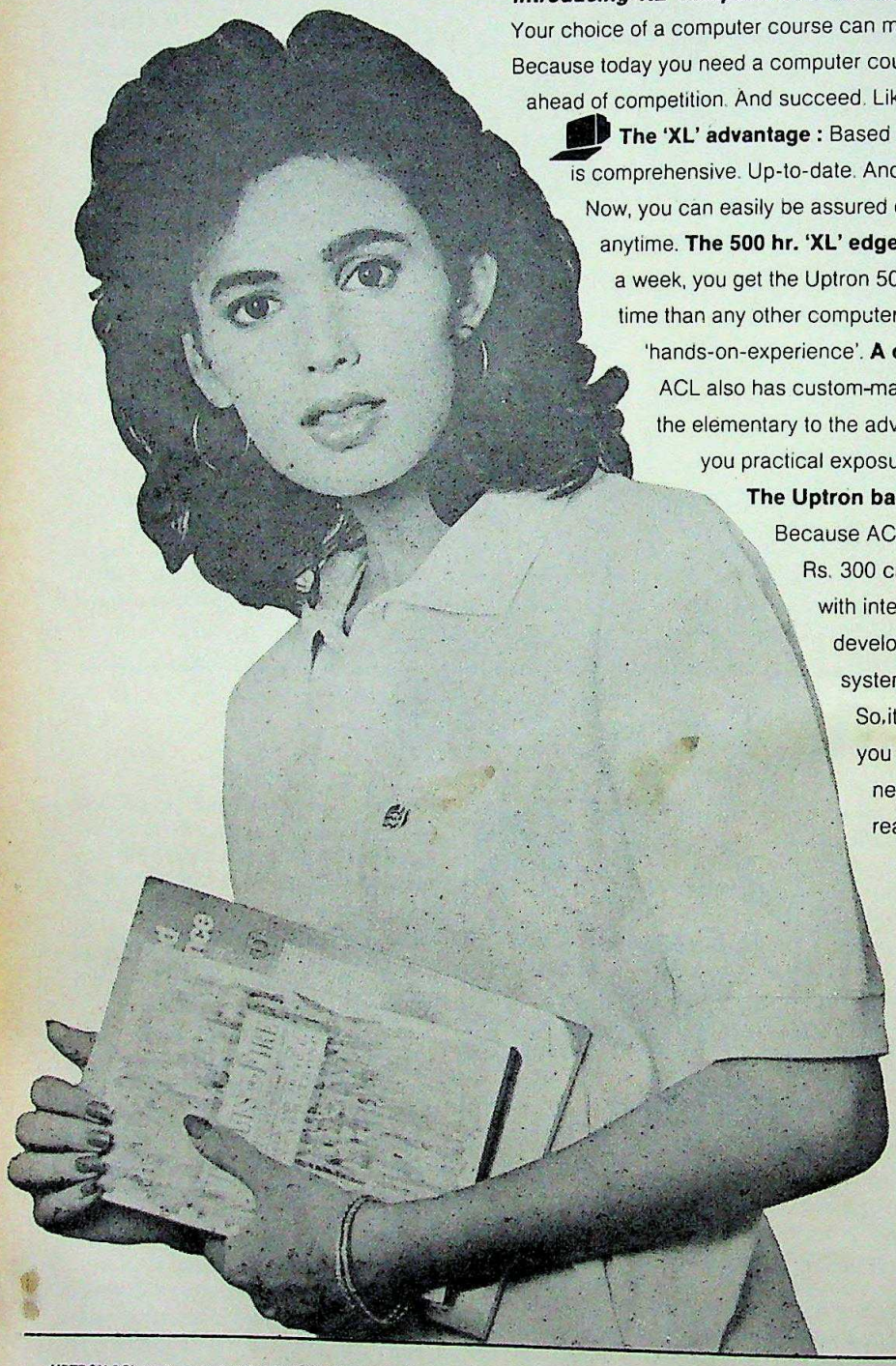
Their campaign includes the successful intimidation of the media—forcing newspapers to abjure the use of the word "terrorist", and to compel them to print extremist propaganda verbatim. They have even started trying to reach Sikhs in the army, writing letters to soldiers to commute their pensions and "contribute" 10 per cent to the "cause" or face the consequences. Most of the Akali leaders, save a few still speaking out, have been scared into silence.

There is no room for complacency. Inaction will simply compound the horror of Punjab and sooner or later lead to a migration of minorities with devastating consequences for the nation. Ordinary Hindus and Sikhs are fed up with the extremists. But they will not resist them unless they can be convinced by the Centre that it has the resolve to act decisively to restore the authority of government. It must do so without delay even if this means taking the help of the army for a brief period.

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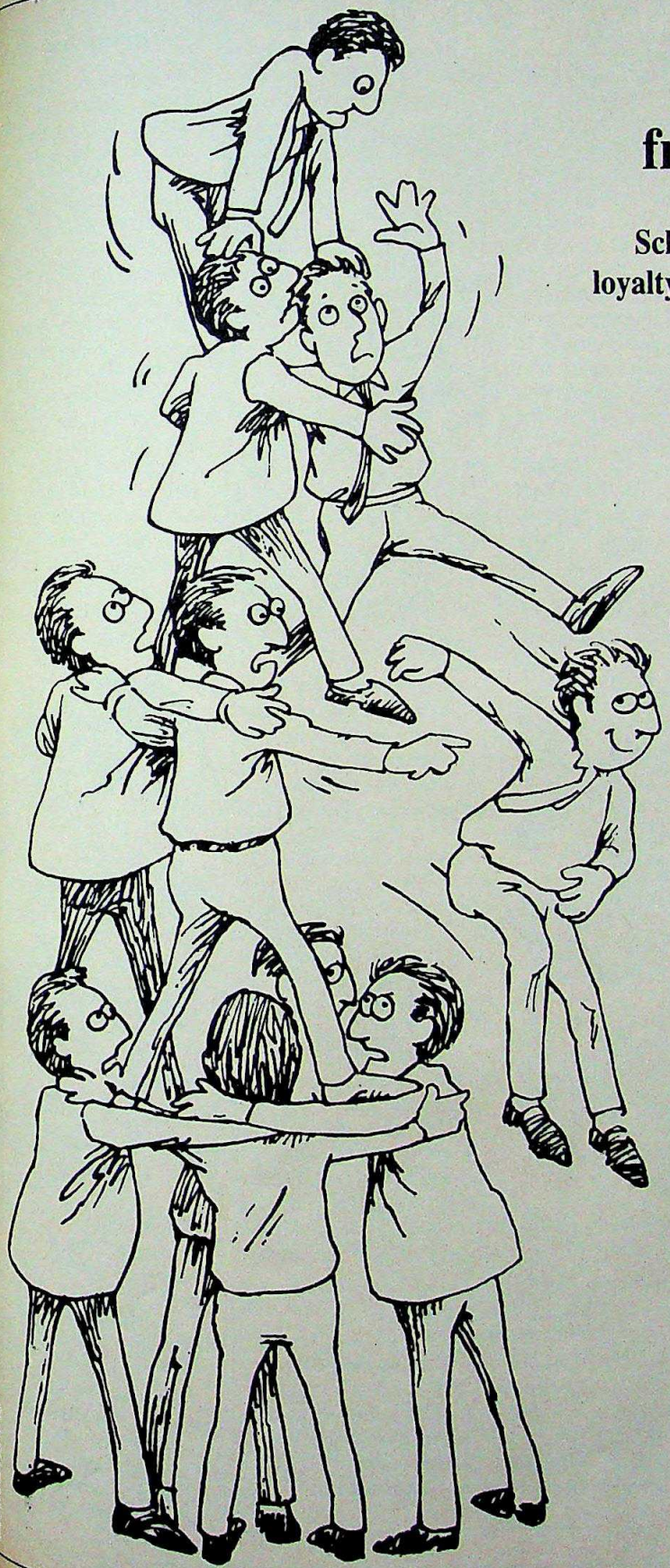
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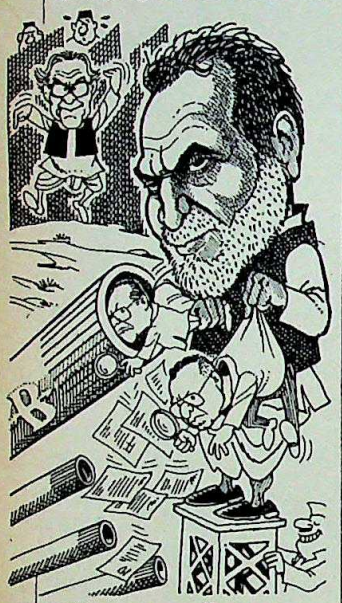
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Bofors Bluff

● Actions often speak louder than words. Prime Minister Chandra Shekhar's assurances that his government would not relent in pursuing the Bofors investi-



gation as well as cases against big-shot economic offenders, began to ring hollow when the axe fell on two of the Government's most tenacious watch-dogs in this area. CBI chief Rajendra Shekar and revenue secretary Rajiv Lochan Mishra have both been given their marching orders—back to Rajasthan, their cadre state. The development created a noticeable stir in bureaucratic and political circles because the two had been identified with a tough line on Bofors, erring industrialists, and the financial dealings of godman Chandraswamy.

But Chandra Shekhar is now using a unique explanation to justify their transfer. His aides are putting out the word that the move was in response to a request from Rajasthan Chief Minister Bhairon Singh Shekhawat who was insisting that officials with impeccable reputations be returned to his state to clean up his administration. Chandra Shekhar, his publicists say, will gladly transfer officials from the Centre to the states in the higher interest of fighting corruption at the state level.

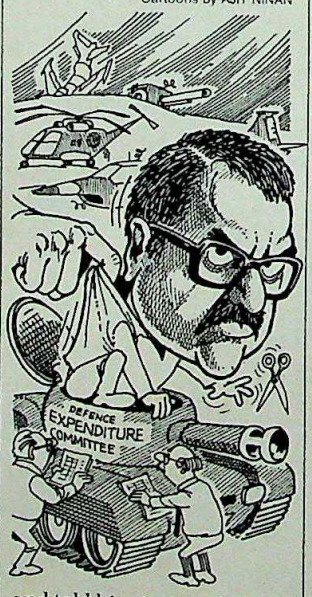
Staying On

● Arun Singh, once Rajiv Gandhi's most powerful lieutenant, will be around the capital for a while longer.

When V.P. Singh became prime minister, he tried to lure Arun out from his hill retreat at Binsar by offering him the defence portfolio. Arun declined saying he had renounced politics. But he readily agreed, in June, to head a project after his own heart—an Expenditure Committee within the Defence Ministry. This was a non-political contractual assignment. When V.P. Singh was ousted, Arun put in his papers leaving it to the new Government to decide the committee's fate.

The new Government rejected Arun's resignation

Cartoons by AJIT NINAN



and told him to complete his work. He's agreed.

Media Manager

● Good PR always pays off handsomely. And no one knows this better than the new Commerce Minister, the articulate Subramaniam Swamy. Though Swamy



basks in controversy he receives better press than most politicians, whether in or out of government.

After the BJP withdrew support from the National Front government, among the first politicians to get top news billing was Swamy. "Swamy asks VP to resign", the headlines screamed. Soon after he joined the new Government, his travels began to be well covered. "Dr Swamy leaves for Brussels", the headlines chorused about his participation in the GATT conference.

The coverage which invariably emanates from PTI may be justified. But it occurs with a little help from Swamy who visits PTI headquarters armed with press releases about himself. When necessary, he even sits there and writes them out.

Uprooting Way

● For too long, India's first green politician Maneka Gandhi had her wings clipped as minister of state for environment in the V.P. Singh ministry, as her senior minister Nilamani Routray ruled the roost. So, when she came back with independent charge of her pet ministry she wanted to leave no one in doubt about who was boss.

Last fortnight, Maneka reshuffled almost the entire top brass of the ministry. In one swift move, 14 top officers including almost all additional secretaries and joint secretaries and some deputy secretaries were moved to new assignments within the ministry. The wholesale shifting is likely to paralyse the ministry for at least a



couple of months as the officers come to grips with the issues in their respective departments.

While nobody was ready to hazard a guess as to what the fire-brand minister sought to accomplish, a senior bureaucrat in the ministry said: "We know the minister is wearing the pants but does she need to be so demonstrative about it?"

TAIL PIECE

For the nth time the Prime Minister's Office received an anonymous call, with the caller insisting on talking to V.P. Singh. He was informed that Singh was no longer the prime minister, so why did he keep calling. The reply: "I know he's not. I call just for the pleasure of hearing that he's not."

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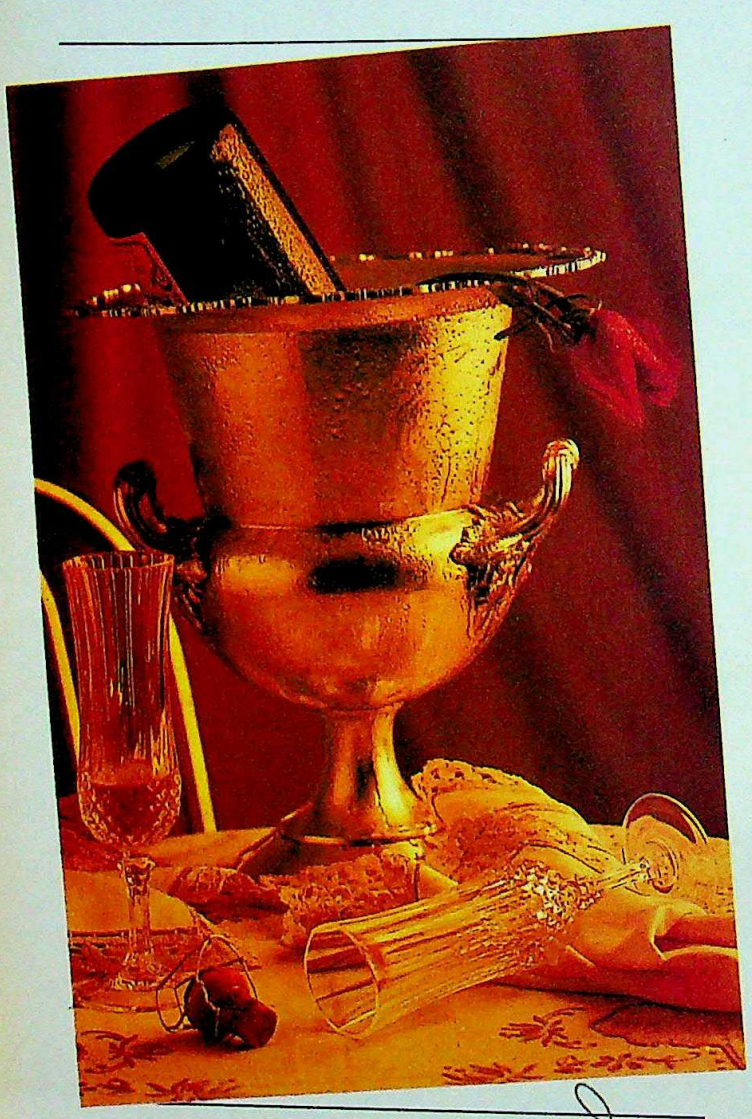
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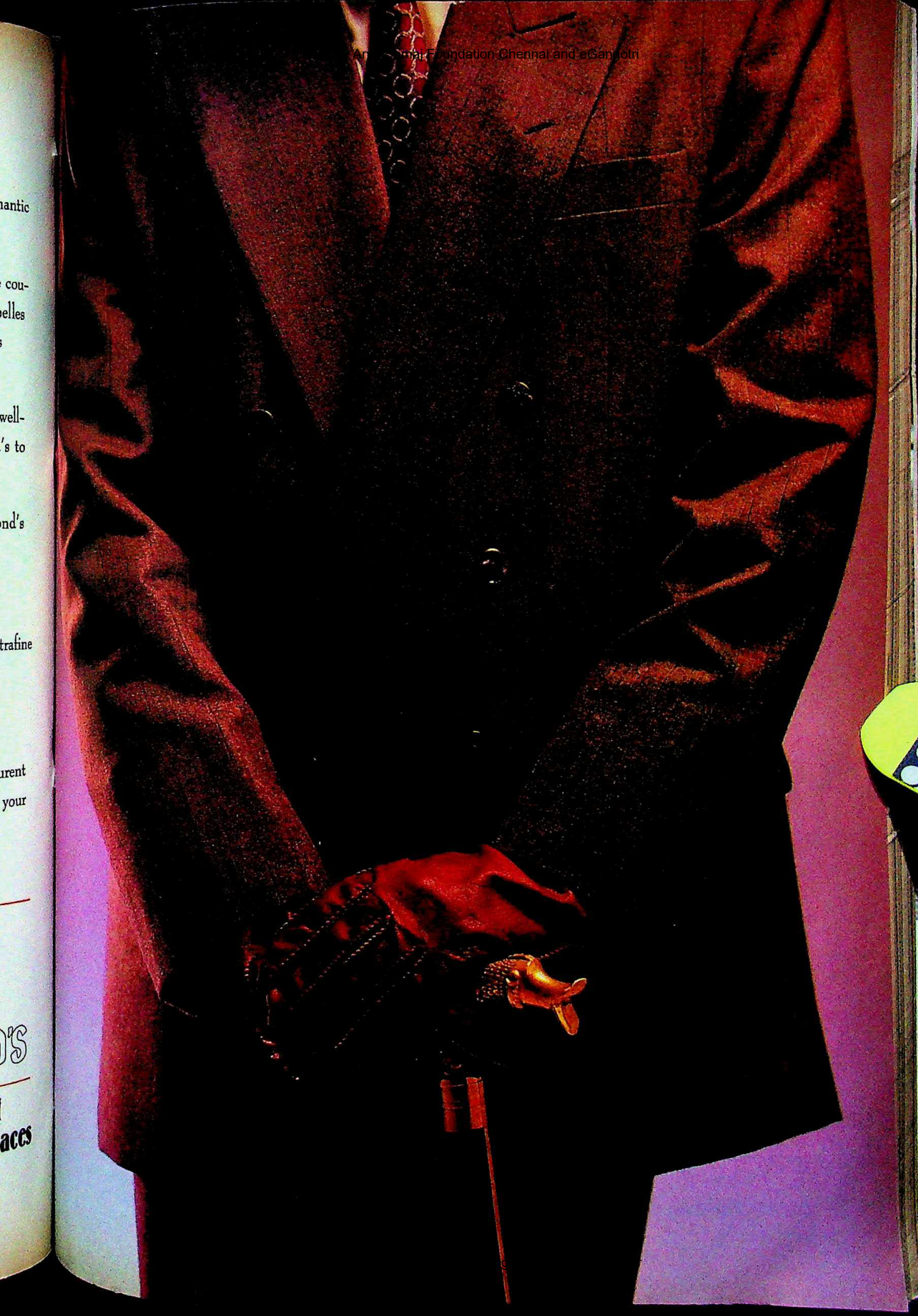


Royal Gold
Raymond's

Also worn at some exciting places in India.

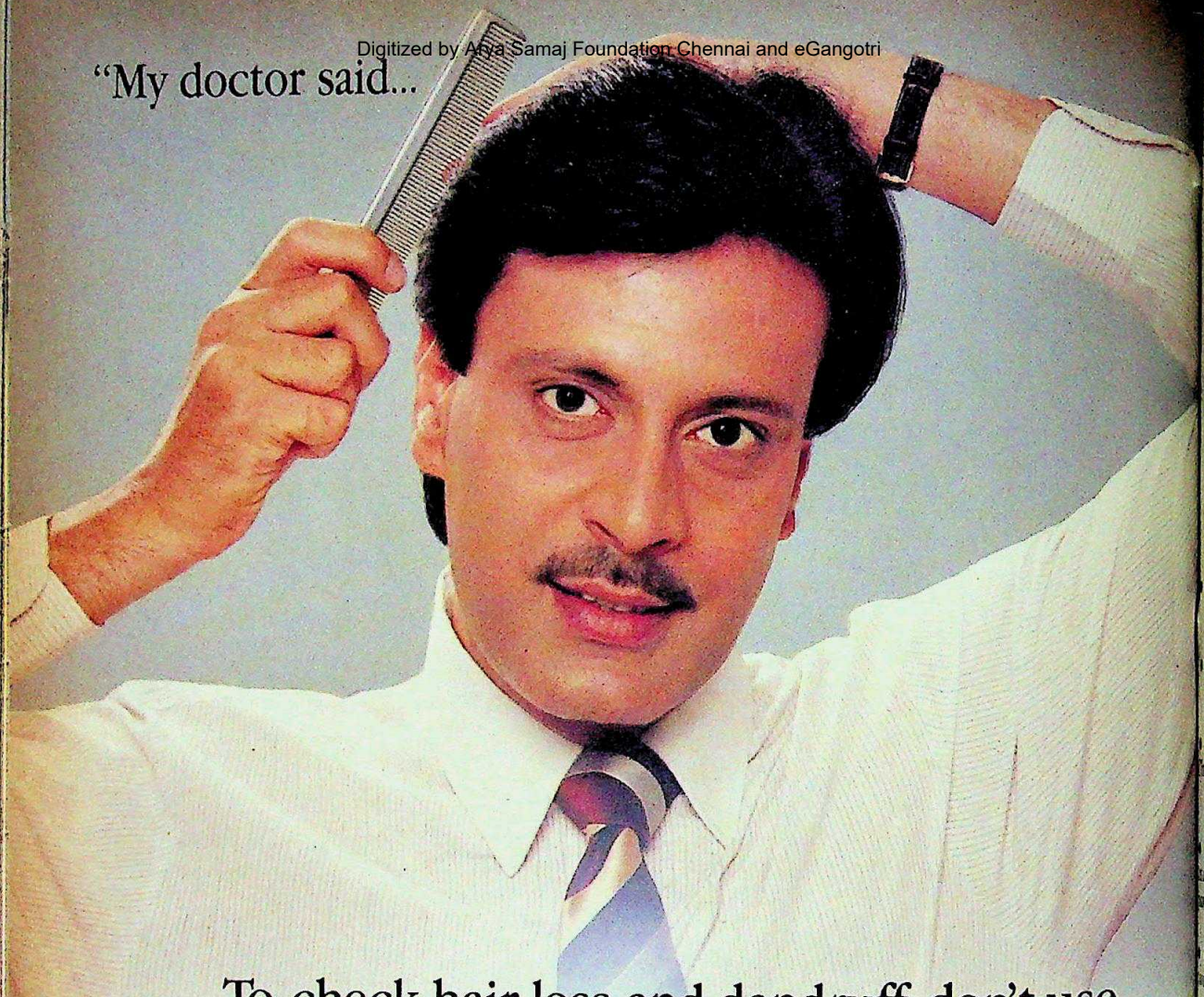
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- Nicotinic Acid : Enhances absorption of the drug (4)
- Resorcinol : Checks dandruff (5)
- Hialkyl : Prevents scalp infection (5)



Reference : (1) Windholz, M., Merck Index, 10th ed. p. 760, 1983 (2) Settel, E., Drugs & Cosmetic Industry, p. 121, 34, 1977 (3) Driscol, W.R., Drugs & Cosmetic Industry, p. 116, 42, 1975 (4) Krantz, J.C. et al, Pharm. Principles of Medical Practice p. 956, 1965 (5) Wade, A., Martindale, Ext. Pharmaco. p. 502, 32, 1982

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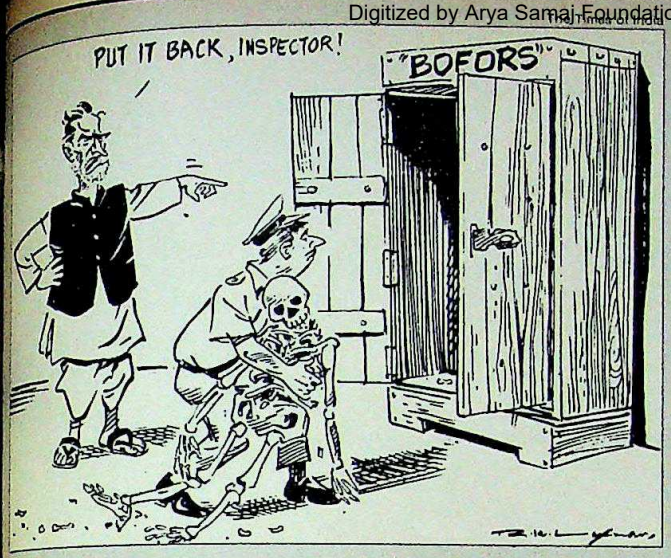
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The Congress has taken a great risk.

■ CHANDRA SHEKHAR

I am wiser now and am scared of mergers.

■ V.P. SINGH in the *Indian Express*

The leaders of the VHP, BJP *and the Bajrang Dal do not know what Islam is. Therefore they should not talk about the religion.*

■ SYED ABDULLAH BUKHARI, shahi imam of Jama Masjid, in *The Hindu*

I have never been obsessed with Ram Janmabhoomi though I do regard it as a characteristic example of the pseudo-secularism practised by all political parties.

■ L.K. ADVANI in *Frontline*

Do you need a referendum to establish the existence of the sun? Two and two is four and a referendum can't make it five.

■ ASHOK SINGHAL, secretary-general of the VHP, in *The Times of India*

I was feeling tired after serving the SGPC *for 18 years.*

■ GURCHARAN SINGH TOHRA, on relinquishing charge as SGPC president, in *The Tribune*

There are limits to honesty.

■ SUBODH KANT SAHAY, minister of state for information and broadcasting

We consider the navy to be a progressive organisation that should not be closed to women.

■ J.G. NADKARNI, former chief of naval staff, in *The Independent*

You want to save this country's green cover. Start with giving up meat. Everything else comes later.

■ MANEKA GANDHI in *The Illustrated Weekly of India*

Sometimes I literally feel that I am God's son. And nothing can go wrong.

■ ARUN LAL in *Sportsworld*

I don't think I am capable of inflicting the kind of cruelty attributed to me even on my worst enemy.

■ REKHA in *Stardust*

I'm still weird. I'm Indian and all Indians are weird.

■ PAMELLA BORDES in *The Independent*, London

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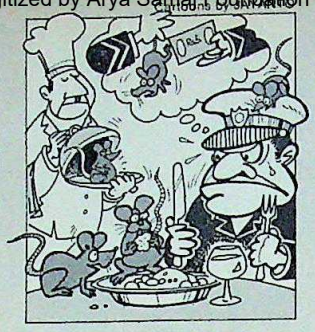
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SQUEAKY SAILORS



■ What the Indian Navy needs is no more high-tech equipment but a modern day Pied Piper to take care of the rats that have overrun its most prestigious aircraft carrier, *INS Vikrant*.

The rodents scurry around the ship and not content with merely nibbling at the toes of the sailors they were recently seen relishing left-overs under the very eyes of no less a personage than the chief of naval staff himself.

The squeaky four-legged sailors, whose travels around the world would make even Columbus turn green, have sailed the seven seas along with their uniformed colleagues. Desperate to solve their problem the naval authorities have come up with a novel method to deal with the pesky mice. Hoping to inspire an effective solution they are baiting the sailors with a five-rupee reward for every rat caught.

Well, if the sailors don't bite then the rats will.

DEAD MAN'S BLUFF

■ Calcutta's myriad *gullies* and teeming millions make it easy for petty thieves and pickpockets to escape after having done their deed. But god help those who get caught.

A pickpocket was recently dragged out of a bus on Judges Court Road in south Calcutta, after he was caught trying to pick a thick purse from an alert bus commuter. As is the practice in Calcutta, instant justice was meted out to him. A mob beat the life out of him. Or so they all thought.

When they saw that he was no longer breathing, and some had even pronounced him dead, they



scampered away not wanting to answer searching questions from the police. But it turned out picking pockets was not the only trade that the man has mastered. He had even mastered the art of playing dead. For a short while. As soon as he realised that the mob had left he too got up and ran for his life.

HAIRY TALE



■ Offering one's hair to the Lord is widely recognised by Hindus as a worthy sacrifice. Few Hindus go against the hair as far as this basic belief is considered.

But a few thieves who operate near some of the temples in Kerala believe they should get their share too. As a lady who recently went to the Mahadevar temple in Kottayam, with her child, realised rather too late. She stood with her child near the sanctum sanctorum among the thronging crowd engrossed in prayer, her long hair let down after the symbolic bath of purification.

No sooner had she finished praying that she felt lighter. Not just of mind but of body too. Her flowing hair had been neatly snipped off without her even realising it. It was apparently not the first time that the nimble fingered thief—who probably sells the hair to wig makers—had created such a hair-raising situation in the temple.

JUICY STORY

■ From Himachal Pradesh which produces an abundance of apples comes a juicy story. Only that it is all about apple juice going down the drain.

Authorities say that the juice concentrate was stored in a stainless steel tank at a food processing unit in Parwanoo in Shimla district. In a bizarre situation one night the tank sank as the earth gave way, causing a leak. The apple juice drained out through the night until finally in the morning, the leak was discovered and duly plugged. Explanations are now being



demanded of the hapless officials, who hope to salvage at least 10 tonnes of the concentrate.

Himachal Pradesh is not exactly a place where milk and honey flow. But now at least the Tourism Department can say that it is a place where apple juice flows. Even down the drain.

ODD GOD

■ Are the days of *baingan ka bharta* over? Not really, even though the ordinary brinjal has recently got a divine dimension.

It all started when some residents of a village near Ranchi in Bihar cut open a brinjal and discovered that



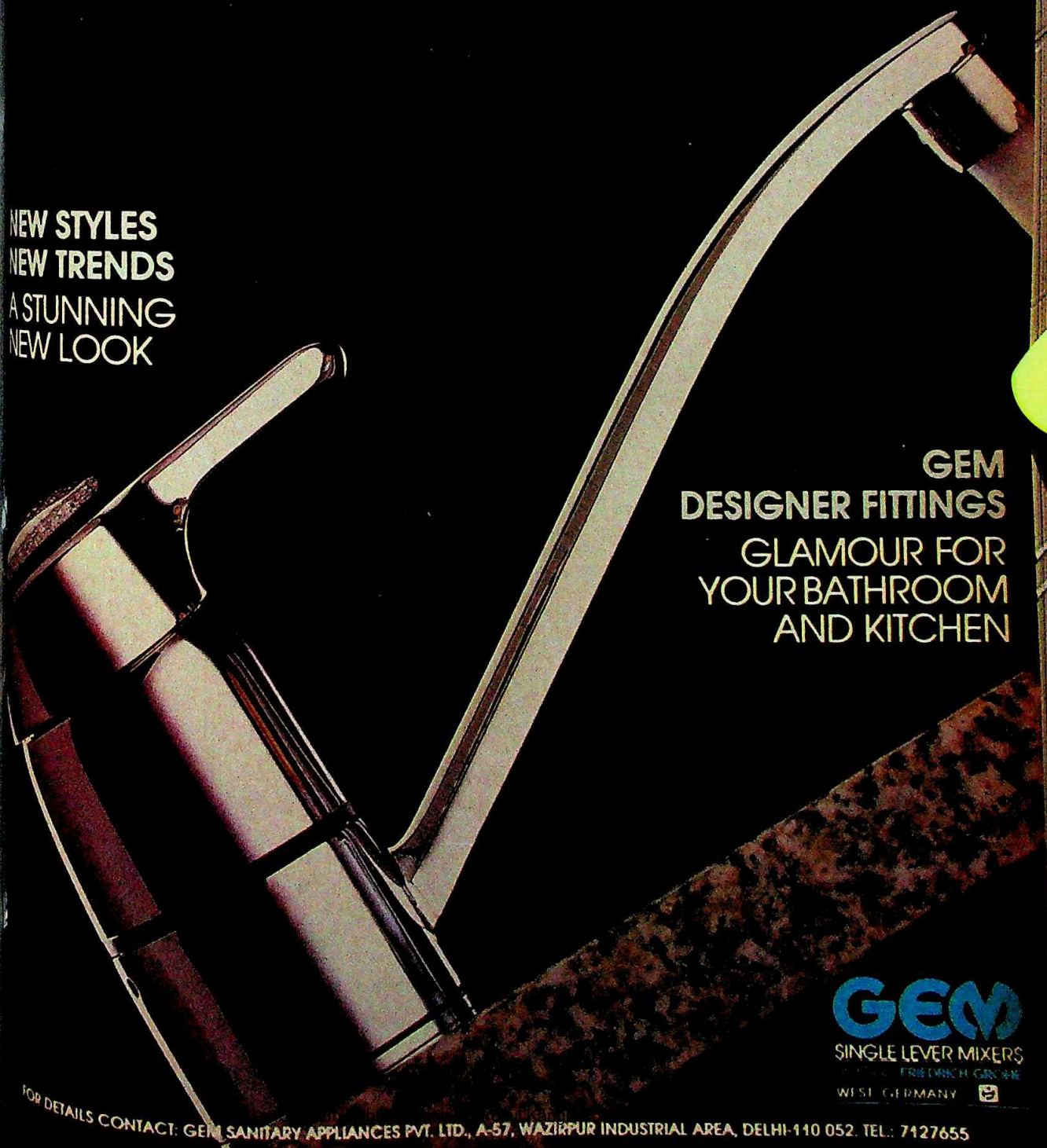
the seeds inside were in the shape of Om. And soon after, innumerable brinjals with Om carved within have too been appearing in Ranchi city. Meanwhile, the pious populace in the village have stopped including brinjals in their diet as they believe that god has manifested himself in the lowly vegetable. The brinjal, they decree should be an object of devotion.

Unlike their rural brethren, the people of Ranchi city have however not stopped consuming brinjals though the popular vegetable is from now on being handled with a great deal of reverence.

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ASSAM

State of Strife

Even with the army taking on the banned ULFA, the state faces a prolonged stretch of instability.



By UTTAM SENGUPTA

THERE was a sense of inevitability about it all. That Assam was turbulent enough for the army to move in was a foregone conclusion. But even so, it showed the level of organisation of the outlawed, secessionist United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA), that it seemed to know the date on which the army would move in. Consequently most of the ULFA leaders made good their escape, and what fell to the army were deserted rebel camps, some arms and of course the ghastly graves left behind as symbols of the insurgency that has held the people of the state to ransom for nearly a year now.

The present assignment appeared to commit the army to the daunting task of digging into the Brahmaputra Valley, which is three times bigger than the Kashmir Valley.

However, on paper Operation Bajrang was far from being spectacular. Just five brigades of the 2nd and the 21st Mountain Division were pressed into service, helicopters were sparingly used and neither artillery nor tanks were called in.

As the trucks and armoured personnel carriers rumbled out and helicopters dropped army commandos in the dense forests in Upper Assam, panic was sparked off. The rattle of gunfire prompted several hundred villagers to desert their homes and seek refuge at Digboi in Tinsukia district.

For the army, it was a frustrating operation. Not only was it given a mere 24 hours notice to move but was also deprived of the element of surprise by a calculated leak—ULFA Commander-in-Chief Paresh Baruah issued a circular on November 17, asking his men to abandon their camps by November 19. The army moved in on November 28 and found that the big fish had escaped.

The signals for the future were slightly blurred. The Chief of Staff, Eastern Command, Lt-General K.S. Brar sounded emphatic when he said: "We have not come here for a picnic; we have come here to stay." But the longer the army takes to flush out the terrorists and green-signal the conduct of the elections due early next year, the more the Centre will have to take the flak for the problems facing the state.

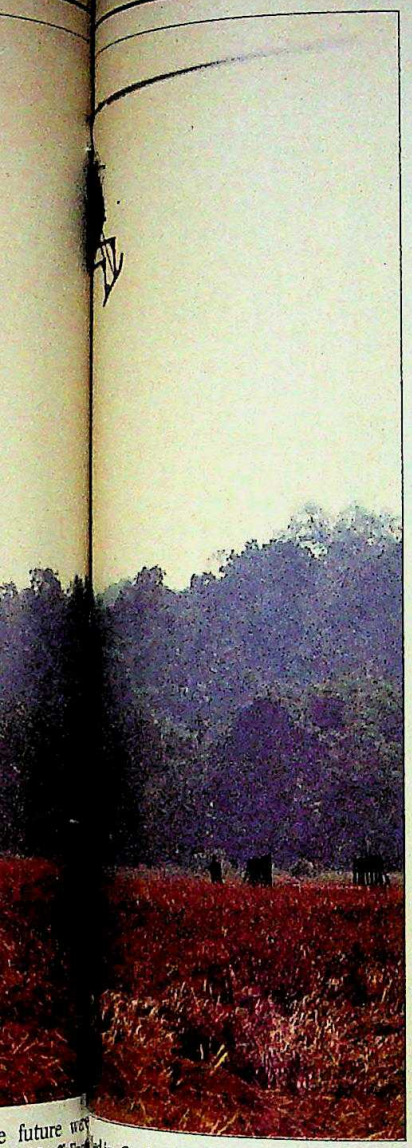
Sensing this, the Asom Gana Parishad (AGP) has stated that the Centre was conspiring to foist the Congress(I) on the state. The fact that the Congress(I) in Assam has been vocal in denouncing campaigns against the army added weight to the AGP argument.

In any case opposition to the army was widespread in the state. The Opposition leader Hemen Das welcomed the imposition of President's Rule but said that the police and paramilitary forces should have been deployed before the army was

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■ **Operation Bajrang under way; (right) one of the many graves**

The discovery of mass graves exploded ULFA's Robin Hood image and revealed the cruelty it indulged in under the guise of meting out justice.

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atrocities." However,
army brushed aside
allegations saying
in that type of terrain
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and what they were
were armoured per-
el carriers to provide safe pas-
e to troops.

Governor D.D. Thakur was candid
gh to acknowledge that the situa-
was far too fluid and that a clear
ure could emerge only after some
e. But the fact that the army had
ed or detected as many as 47 ULFA
es, each capable of accommodating
militants, was an achievement in
k. For the army, Operation Bajrang
ed out to be something of a damp-
ener because there was no resistance at all. And this gave rise to doubts as to whether ULFA was afterall only a media creation.

WHILE ULFA's retreat seemed at the early stage of the operation to be a strategic withdrawal, the organisation itself made no such claim. It broke its silence five days after the operation began and merely declared that the deployment of the army was proof that they could strike at the "foundation of Indian imperialism". The delayed reaction and the lack of resistance left little doubt that the organisation had suffered a major setback. At Guwahati an ULFA supporter admitted as much: "It is no doubt a setback but it is also a blessing in disguise, because we will be better prepared in the future."

Whether they have much of a future at all in Assam is doubtful, not just due to the army action but also because their Robin Hood facade has been ripped apart after the discovery of mass graves. These suggest that the ULFA has been indulging in unprecedented cruelty and mayhem in the guise of meting out instant justice and helping the poor villagers. Even if the AGP returns to

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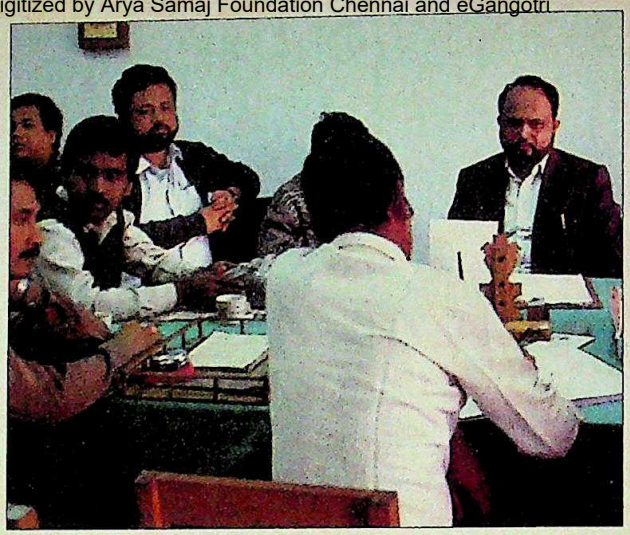
power against all odds, it might be impossible for them to continue to turn a Nelson's eye to ULFA activities. The Congress(I)'s return would of course mean that what the army began the Government will continue.

The fact that AGP does not command as much respect as it used to earlier became obvious when the bandh that the party called on November 30 was neither successful nor spontaneous.

As for the ULFA, it is obvious that the next step it will take is to resort to hit-and-run tactics. The documents that were left behind by the insurgents are revealing. They suggest that the ULFA activists were serious about their goal of creating a "sovereign, independent, socialist Asom". Among the recoveries were videos of war films and guerrilla warfare, and army training manuals. It is also clear that the organisation has links with the banned National Socialist Council of Nagaland, Kachin Independent Army of Burma and other guerrilla units like Tripura National Volunteers and the People's Liberation Army of Manipur.

And of late, the ULFA had grown cocky and arrogant after the kidnappings, extortions and calculated killings. It issued a stiff warning to the press in July this year that its permission must be sought before any report is published on its activities. The humiliation it suffered at the hands of the army will be difficult for them to get over.

Just as ULFA has been cleverly used by the Congress(I) to re-establish its presence in the state, the AGP too is bound to try and whip up ethnic and regional passions in an attempt to stage a comeback. The party obviously hopes that amid the staccato burst of gunfire and the stench of bodies deep in the dark forests, the people of the state will forget about their five years of misrule, and gift them another opportunity. But, considering their disastrous non-rule, that is clearly wishful thinking. And, with the Congress(I) having failed to capitalise on the failures of the AGP, a prolonged stretch of political and social instability seems to be once again written in Assam's future.



■ **Mahanta with colleagues: disastrous non-rule**

To outwit the Congress(I) plan the AGP is bound to whip up ethnic and regional passions to stage a comeback.



LT-GENERAL Baljit Singh, Chief of Staff Eastern Command, spoke to Principal Correspondent UTTAM SENGUPTA.

LT-GEN. BALJIT SINGH

"The ULFA boys are not amateurs"

On the discovery of the graves:

We stumbled on them by accident. They are reminiscent of the horrors of My Lai or Nellie. We suspect there are similar graves in other places.

Whether the police could have been used against ULFA:

The ULFA boys are not amateurs and they have imbibed the ethos of the insurgents. I feel it would have been beyond the capabilities of the police.

Whether ULFA benefited from a leak about the army action:

They certainly have the benefit of very good intelligence. We have recovered a secret document in which the Indian Government had shared the knowledge of routes being used by ULFA at the Indo-Burma borders, with the Assam Home Department. And the document bore an inscription by the ULFA commander saying it was a must to find out who among them was leaking these secrets.

On ULFA's foreign links:

Documents and photographs recovered show a more than fraternal relationship between ULFA and the Kachin Independent Army of Burma.

On charges of rapes and atrocities:

Operation Bajrang is on in 13 out of 23 districts of Assam. But these allegations have been made only in Dibrugarh, Tinsukia and Sibsagar where ULFA had their strongest bases. So the charges have not come as a surprise. But they do hurt. A section of the press has launched a deliberate smear campaign. Though the lady magistrate who inquired into rape charges, has said that the charges were baseless.

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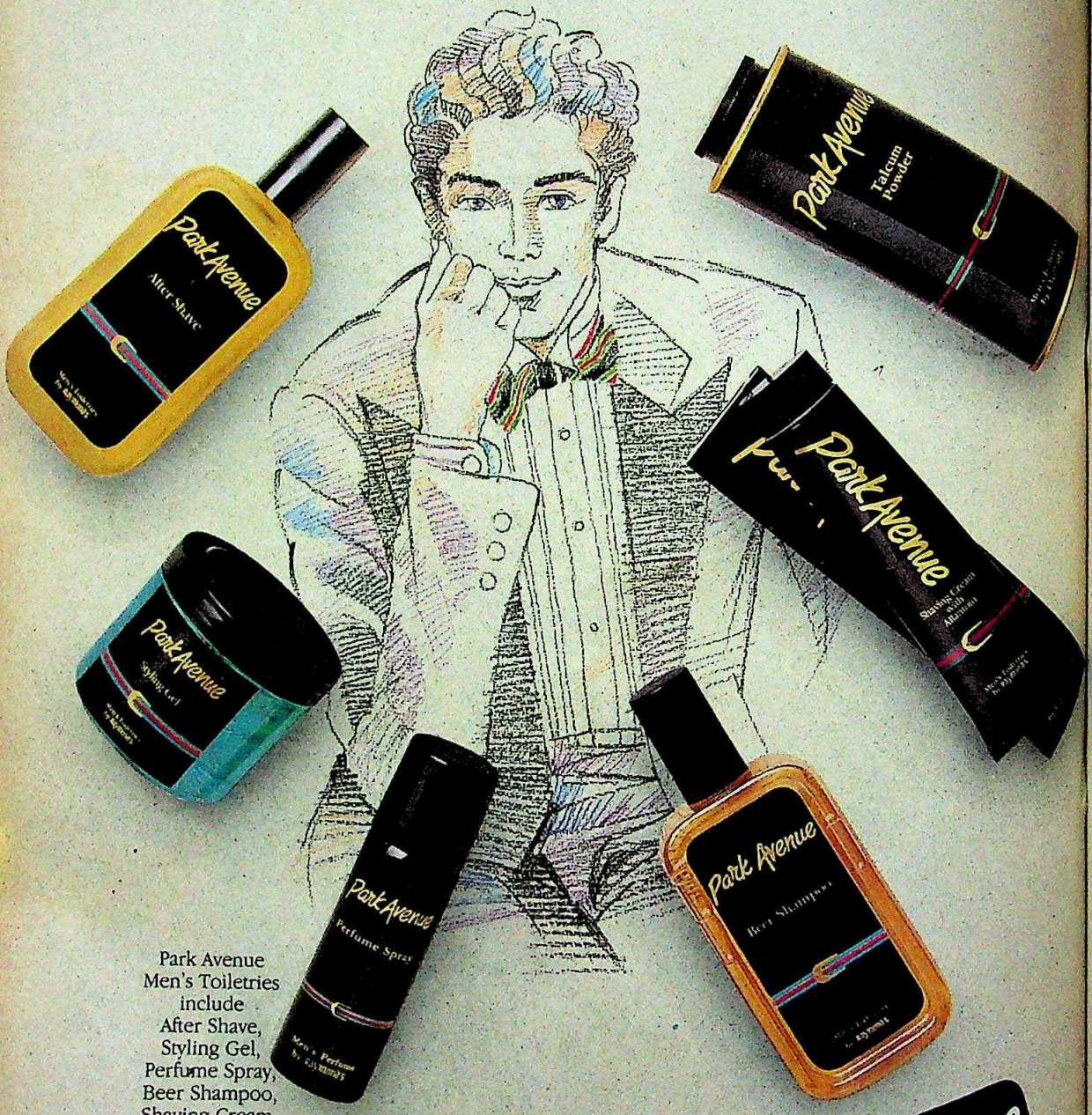
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PRAMOD PUSHKARNA

Virendra Verma has proved to be a completely uninspiring and inept governor and will leave his successor a shattered administration.

Though acknowledged to be the toughest police chief against militancy, K.P.S. Gill may be sacrificed as a sop to the Akalis.



SHARAD SAXENA

PUNJAB

Dangerous Upsurge

While the Centre gropes for options, the militants are killing soft targets, triggering off migrations, and imposing their will on the state.

By SHEKHAR GUPTA

FOR a nation slowly getting inured to a daily dose of killings, Punjab had slowly begun to recede from mainstream consciousness. Cynical officials had even begun likening the malaise to diabetes: it bothers you, but it won't kill you. A few adjustments, and you can live with it.

Last fortnight that complacence became a thing of the past as the macabre dance of death in the state reached a new frenzy. Also, after nearly a year, during which the victims of militants were increasingly fellow Sikhs, the guns were once again trained on the Hindus in the countryside. This triggered off the one phenomenon that rattles even the most cynical of governments: migration.

Once again, as hordes of Hindus—at least 1,500 families—fled from medium-sized towns close to the border, such as Bhikhiwind and Patti, the militants' gameplan was clear: generating an exodus of Hindus to provoke a backlash against the Sikhs outside Punjab which in turn would spark off an exchange of population. The migration shook up the Centre which, after several high-level meetings of top bureaucrats, security officials and political leaders, was veering round to drafting yet another action plan for Punjab. While the contours of the new plan were still emerging last week, it seemed to be based on a three-pronged approach: to change the face of the administration by moving the ineffective governor and controversial police chief and chief secretary, to sharpen the edge of counter-terrorist action and holding out the carrot in the form of a package of economic concessions and an offer of talks.

Whatever the specifics of the plan that is finally implemented, there is nothing in it that would be innovative or revolutionary. Each time the violence in Punjab has reached a new high, the Government has responded with similar action plans—each time with

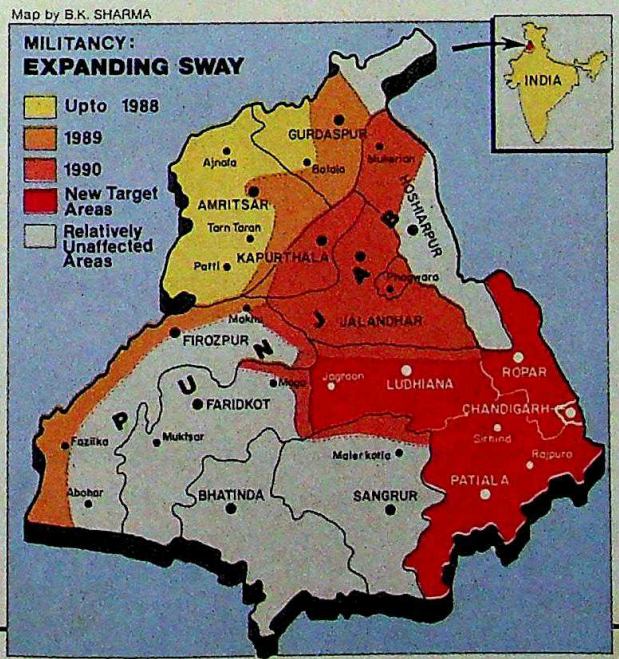
THE DEATH ROLL

1988	3,074
1989	2,729
1990	3,560*

From 1.1.90 to 11.12.90

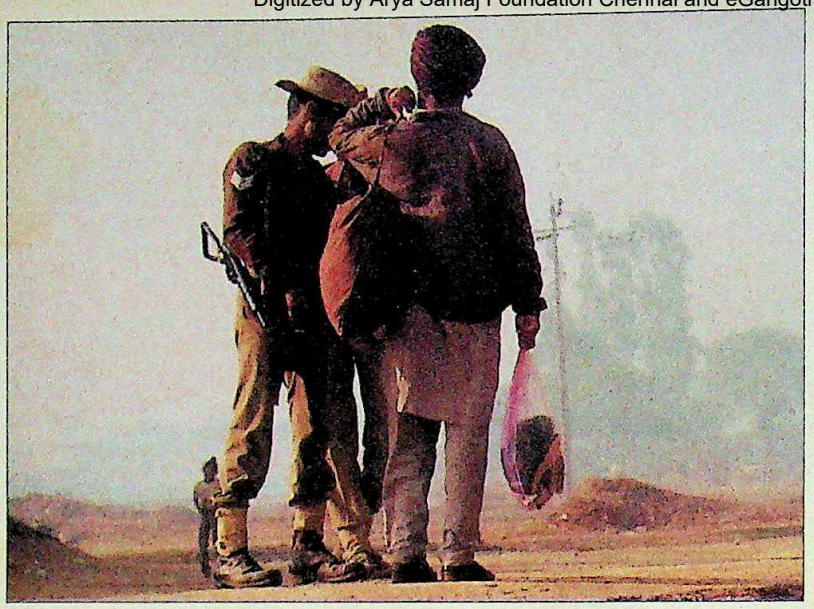
*Civilians killed	1,896
*Militants killed	1,199
*Security men killed	465

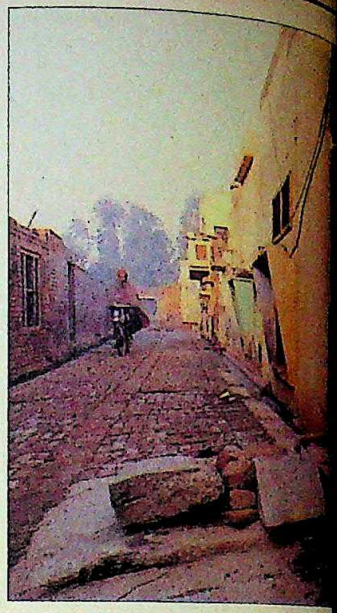
Map by B.K. SHARMA



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The Government has been shaken up by a renewed exodus of Hindus, leaving entire streets deserted in border vill

very little success. Ever since the dismissal of the Darbara Singh government following the first killings of bus passengers in 1983, Punjab has had eight governors, six police chiefs and seven chief secretaries making governance a cruel game of musical chairs while the need of the hour is consistency.

But given the deterioration in the situation, the Government seems to be left with no option. Governor Virendra Verma and Director-General of Police Kanwar Pal Singh Gill have been sparring openly and working at cross-purposes. If there is any unanimity acro the board in Punjab it is on the need replace the governor. And thou many—even within the Akali f tions—privately admit that Gill is t most effective police chief in the fi against militancy, the Governm



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PRASHANT PANJIAR

...pathiwind and Patti

...eves the militant organisations will ...er agree to talks unless he is re-...oved, and if that is done it will indeed ...a victory for the militants. It is a ...ficult choice and most of the last-...inute delay on the implementation of ...e new package was on whether Gill should stay or go. Said a top Home Ministry official: "The upsurge in killings and migration leaves us with no option but to make drastic changes."

At endless meetings over the last two weeks the main question was: why was there an upsurge in killings now? Partly it was the militants' response to the killing of several of their hardcore members by the police. As Gill said: "Each time we get hardcore terrorists they respond by hitting soft targets." Partly, officials point out, this is the way militant groups like to welcome a new government at the Centre so as to deny it time to settle down to deal with its greatest challenge.

Also, according to information given by captured militants, it is under pressure from their Pakistani handlers who have been complaining that over the past few months they had been so engrossed in internecine warfare and in vendetta killings of fellow Sikhs that the basic purpose of their being given arms and assistance was being lost. Post-election Pakistan has the advantage of near unanimity on policy towards India at a time when India is going through a phase of instability and doddering in confusion. It is obvious that the Pakistani controllers now want a return on their investment in Indian Punjab.

It is also because after nearly a decade's experience, the militants have perfected the art of exploiting uncertainty in the Government. This happened when the V.P. Singh government came in with the promise of healing the wounds on people's hearts with love and not bayonets. For a month or so, as attendance at *bhog* ceremonies of dead militants swelled and middle ground Akali politicians were sucked in by the extremist movement, police action was virtually in suspended animation. The militants cashed in on the situation, regrouped and struck with a vengeance. Indirectly they were also helped by the kar sewa in Ayodhya as 50 companies of paramilitary forces, nearly a fifth of the entire complement in Punjab, was flown out to douse the communal fires raging elsewhere in the country.

The uncertainty of the past month

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has been worse than ever before. The governor, the chief secretary and the police chief do not know whether they are staying or going. This has a cascading effect down the line on the state apparatus, destroying whatever initiative a few courageous individuals have at the district police level. Said a senior police official: "It is most demoralising when you don't know whether the next dispensation will continue the fight, or remove you, or initiate inquiries into the deaths of militants you've been killing all these months. Everybody wants to sit tight and wait."

That is becoming the norm in many parts of the state now under militant sway *(see map)*. The Hindus too are losing faith in the police's ability to protect them. They say they cannot return to their villages unless the army is called out. "You call out the army in Assam to fight a lesser menace and are shy of doing that in Punjab. What kind of double standard is the Government indulging in?" asks Baldev Chawla, president of the Rashtriya Suraksha Samiti, which looks after the migrants from border areas in Amritsar's Durgiana Temple.

THE clamour for army induction is a cry of despair. But it is no mantra for deliverance. As generals themselves point out, there are no surgical, commando-comic type solutions to the condition of quasi-insurgency in the state. As a top bureaucrat in Chandigarh explains, the best the army can perform is a holding operation.

Today the situation is tactically different from the days of Operations Bluestar and Woodrose in 1984 as there is no concentration of militants and their command in a shrine, village or camp. "This is what makes Punjab different from anything we have faced in the North-east or even Sri Lanka," explained a senior general.

The other option, of using a large task force of the army for massive cordon-and-search operations as in Woodrose is fraught with too many dangers. There will be excesses and

MILITANT GROUPS

Many Arms

A major problem in Punjab is the multiplicity of militant groups each with its own leadership, command structure and objectives. A break-up of the major alliances and groups:

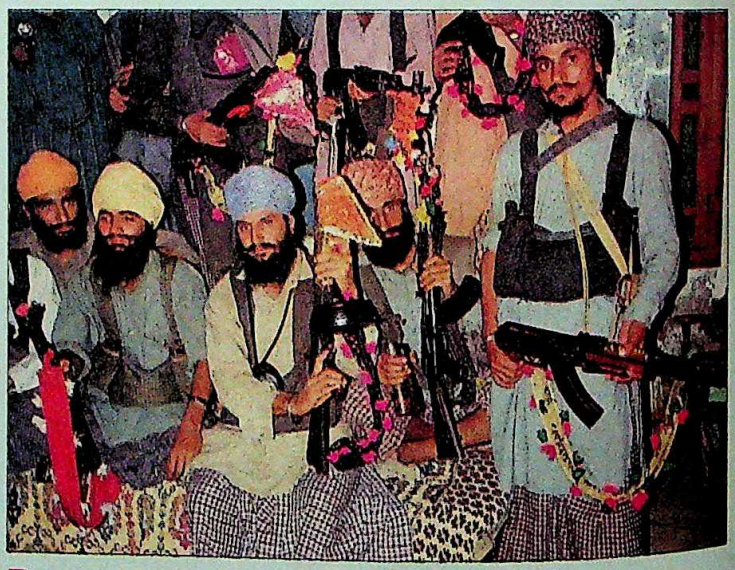
Panthic Committee: This five-member committee is currently the most influential syndicate of militant groups. Led by Dr Sohan Singh, a former director of health services in Punjab, it commands the backing of:

Khalistan Commando Force (Panjwad group): Strongest in firepower, it is led by Paramjit Singh of Panjwad, a nephew of Sukhdev Singh alias Sukha Sipahi alias general Labh Singh.

Babbar Khalsa: It's the only group tracing its lineage to the Bhindranwale days. First active in the anti-Nirankari campaign along with Bibi Amarjit Kaur's Akhand Kirtani Jatha, it is now led by Sukhdev Singh of village Dasuwal in Tarn Taran police district. It's trying to win over Sikh intellectuals to the Khalistan cause.

Khalistan Liberation Force: Led by Gurjant Singh Budhsinghwala, it has lost many of its cadres to the police. So, it has lost much of the influence it had under the leadership of its founder Avtar Singh Brahma.

Bhindranwale Tiger Force of Khalistan (Sangha group): Under the leadership of its former chief Sukhdev Singh Sangha, it had always been with Gurbachan Singh Manochal. But moved over to Sohan Singh's Panthic Committee under its present chief Rachpal Singh Sangha. It is believed to have the support of the splinter group led by Satnam Singh Satta of Harsha Chhina village.



The multiplicity of militant organisations confuses the police and makes it difficult for the Government to begin negotiations

Sikh Students' Federation (Bittu group): Led by Daljit Singh Bittu, it is the federation's most volatile faction, and is actively involved with the Babbars.

Panthic Committee led by Gurbachan Singh Manochal: Manochal first came into prominence when he officiated as the Akal Takht jathedar while J.S. Rode was in jail. Later he emerged as a key militant leader. He is also the chief general of his faction of the Bhindranwale Tiger Force of Khalistan and is supported by:

Khalistan Commando Force (Rajasthani group): It is led by Gurjant Singh Rajasthani from a village in Ganganagar district on the Punjab-Rajasthan border.

All India Sikh Students' Federation (Manjit group): It is a middle-ground group confining itself to political and ideological work.

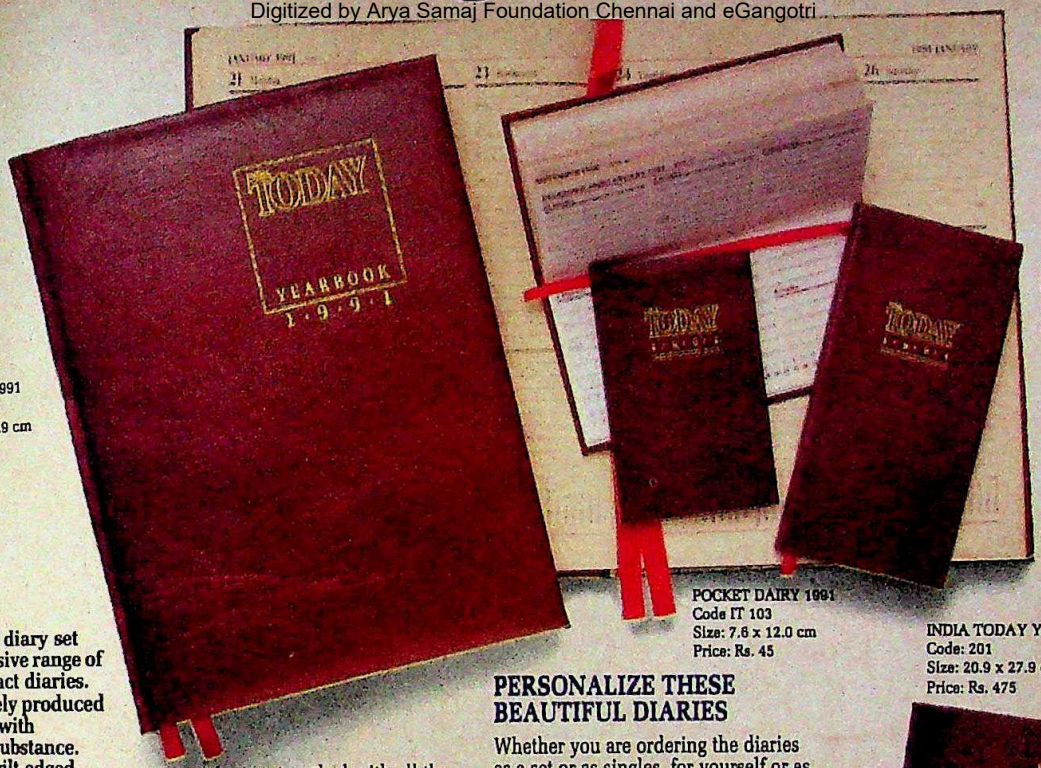
Then there are many independent groups with their own pockets of influence led by militants such as Wassan Singh Zafarwal, Nishan Singh Makhu and Lakhwinder Singh Lakha.

—SHEKHAR GUPTA

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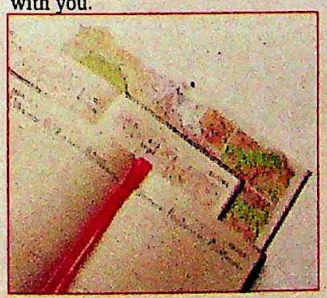
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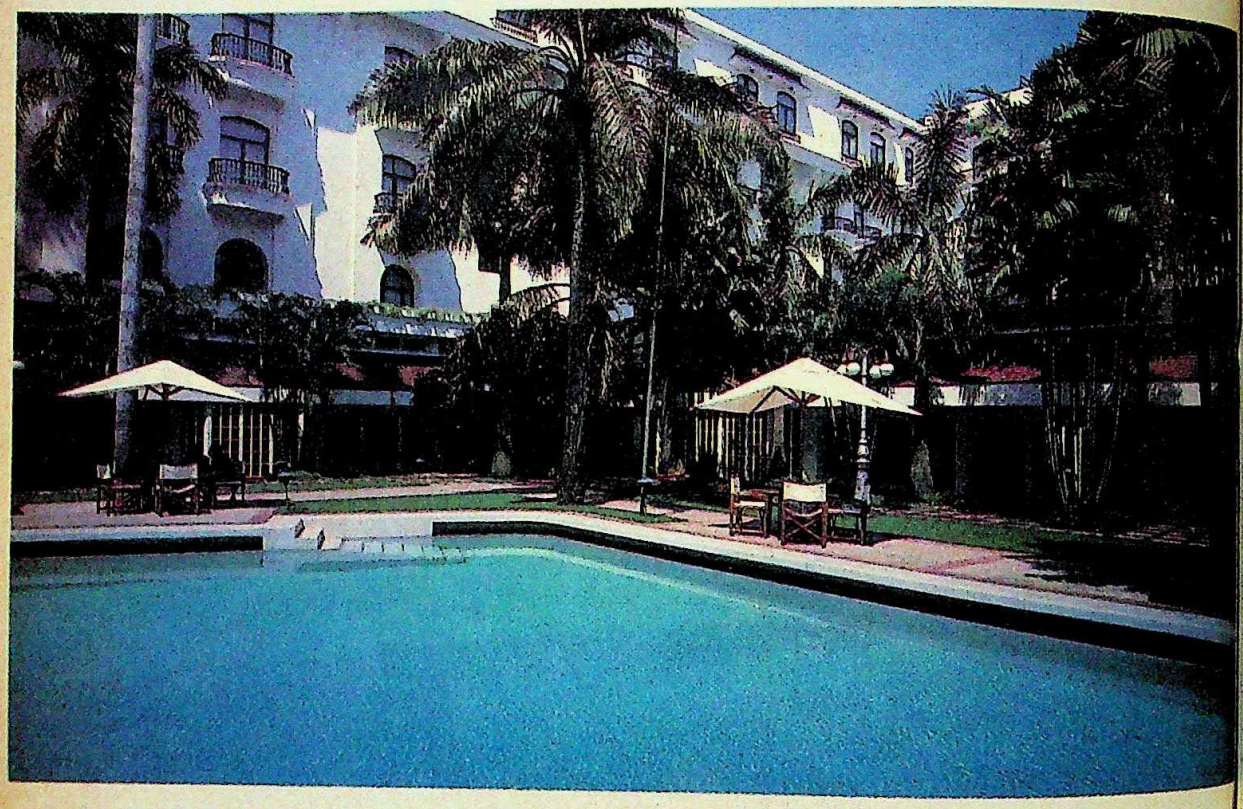
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widespread alienation of the peasantry without commensurate results. Even the most grim intelligence estimates talk of only around 2,500 rifles in the hands of the militants in all of Punjab. Army officers admit that many weapons could be easily hidden in a few border villages in granaries, haystacks or under tubewells. The best way to tackle low-level conflict of this type is with an effective intelligence backed up with swift induction of well-trained, committed troops. The answer is a combination of a network of informants, which already exists, and mobile commandos. The Punjab Armed Police has raised its own commando force which has been fairly effective and the NSG commandos cooling their heels in Amritsar could be utilised better.

THE solution to the Punjab problem has to be a political one and will come only through talks. However, there are two prerequisites for talks: emergence of a single central militant organisation capable of delivering peace in exchange for political concessions instead of a multitude of factions *(see box)*. Also, to offer peace the Government must first achieve a modicum of control and force the militants to feel the need for an agreement. No state worth the paper on which its constitution is written can afford to negotiate with a secessionist force from a position of weakness. At the same time—as India has displayed in Nagaland and Mizoram—a state blessed with a flexible, democratic constitution is perfectly capable of making concessions from a position of strength and accommodating separatist forces. The challenge before the Chandra Shekhar Government is to achieve that favourable swing of the pendulum and then seize the opportunity to begin negotiations.

MEDIA

Under Duress

FOR Rajendra Kumar Talib, the 54-year-old station director of All India Radio at Chandigarh and noted Urdu poet, it was time for some relaxation before the final run up to his daughter's wedding just four days later. On the morning of December 6, as he sat lounging in the sun on the lawn of his sector 19 house, the marriage was the uppermost thought in his mind. For the moment he seemed to have forgotten the threats he had been receiving from the militants for not following their "code of conduct". So he paid little attention as two youths arrived on a scooter, offering to help with the wedding preparations. But just as his son went inside the house to bring chairs for them they pulled out a 9mm pistol and shot Talib in the head.



YOG JOY/The Tribune



The killing of Talib showed that newsmen too are being targeted by militants in Punjab

As the staff of AIR struck work and top radio and television officials came rushing to Chandigarh the realisation was dawning on all in the media that Talib's killing was evidence, if it was required, that journalists in Punjab too are now on the front line in the violent campaign. The killing quickly snuffed out most of whatever will to fight remained in media circles—barring the Punjab Kesari group of Jalandhar, others seemed to be throwing in the towel.

More than two dozen journalists and as many others connected with the media, including newspaper hawkers, have been killed in Punjab so far. But the campaign against the media acquired a scary new edge last month as the Panthic Committee led by Sohan Singh released a "code of conduct" to be followed by journalists covering Punjab.

Apart from other injunctions the code prohibits the press from using expressions such as terrorists or extremists. The prescribed terms are militants, *khadkoos* (fighters) or Khalistani Mujahedin. Most papers in the region quickly fell in line. So did the radio and television stations in Jalandhar and Amritsar. But the Chandigarh station continued to use "terrorist" for which it paid the price. Now even the Centre has permitted the radio and television stations in the region to use "militant" in English and *khadkee* in Hindi and Punjabi.

But that does not solve the problem. The militants also want that the press should not use the prefix "self-styled" while mentioning their ranks. Nor should a rank, such as lieutenant-general or major-general be put in inverted commas. The press has also been forbidden from using information based on "intelligence sources".

Pressures have come in at other levels. In Jalandhar, the nucleus of the regional press, the Punjabi daily *Ajit*, which has been dutifully publishing the advertisements for *bhog* ceremonies of dead militants, has been asked for a discount after making a lot of money from these in recent times. In Chandigarh the venerable *The Tribune* has been told to carry the printline of Khalistan or face the consequences. The management is believed to have decided that it will shut the press rather than succumb to such pressures.

Across the state journalists express helplessness. Said a senior Jalandhar-based editor: "We have fought repressive governments. We have fought blackmailers and criminals. This is something else." In the good old days the pen may have been mightier than the sword. The Kalashnikov is a different matter altogether.

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BOFORS

The Scuttling Game

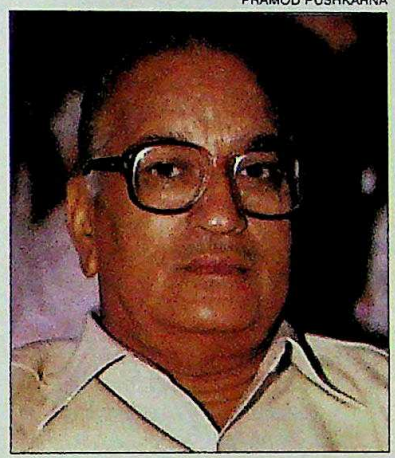
Even as there are signs of a breakthrough, there appear to be serious attempts to give the case a legal burial.

By W.P.S. SIDHU



LIKE the phoenix the Bofors case keeps rising from its ashes. Just when the nation was showing fatigue, after waiting for more than four years for the guns to begin firing, and when the issue had become so 'cold' that even V.P. Singh stopped referring to it, Bofors stormed back on the centrestage last fortnight. Public interest revived when on November 13 the Swiss Federal Court announced its decision to divulge details to India about the secret bank accounts through which the kickbacks money was routed, something that could blow the lid off the final beneficiaries. This coincided with the installation of a Congress(I)-backed Government which swung into action in a crude and transparent attempt to scuttle investigations into the case. It led to what looked like collusion between the Government and the petitioner in a litigation filed in Delhi High Court against the CBI's FIR.

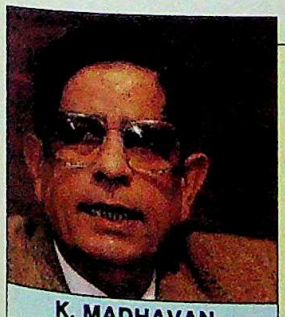
PRAMOD PUSHKARNA



Justice Chawla: unseemly haste

But just when it seemed that the judicial burial would scotch any hopes of ever identifying the guilty in the country's biggest ever corruption case, the opposition parties through some deft manoeuvres retrieved some lost ground. The Janata Dal, the BJP and the CPI(M) asked to be impleaded in the petition hearing that Justice M.K. Chawla seemed to be in a hurry to conclude. The Opposition scored a point when the apex court directed the high court to pass an order on their impleadment plea before reserving judgement in the case. However, they failed to clinch the issue when despite their fervent appeals Justice Chawla did not recuse from the case.

Still, ensuring that the law takes its own course in the Bofors case remains an uphill task. It is feared that the Chandra Shekhar Government will soft-pedal the issue as its lifeline is in the Congress(I) 'hand', whose President Rajiv Gandhi or people close to him are suspected of having accepted



K. MADHAVAN

Madhavan's outburst against Tulsi in Justice Chawla's court has focussed attention on the stalling strategy of the Government.



K.T.S. TULSI

The Drama in Court Room No. 6

Delhi High Court: Monday, December 10, 1990:

Justice Chawla *(Getting up for the day and addressing Prashant Bhushan, counsel for the Janata Dal):* "You, your colleagues and your sympathisers must not issue threats to my life over the telephone."

Prashant Bhushan *(To Justice Chawla):* "I take strong exception to this. It is unfair to direct it to me."

K.R. Bhagat *(Counsel for the petitioner):* "Your lordship, one counsel for the petitioner has also received similar threats on the phone."

Justice Chawla: "I'm concerned about my life."

Tuesday, December 11, 1990:

Ram Jethmalani *(Counsel for Janata Dal beginning his submission):* "In this thoroughly abnormal situation, I beg you that you remove yourself from this case."

Justice Chawla *(Addressing Bhagat, who is rebutting Jethmalani's plea):* "If he makes such a statement I will not try this case. If they do not want me and if they have no confidence in me why should I impose myself?"

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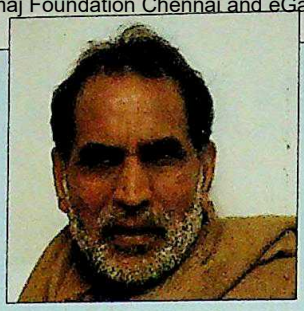
bribes in the Howitzer deal.

The first indication that Shekhar would put the nation's favourite scandal, that has made and unmade governments, on the backburner came on November 12, just three days after he took over as the prime minister, and, ironically, just a day before the Swiss court announced that it would hand over documents related to the A.E. Services account in Zurich to the CBI through the Indian Embassy in Berne. At a press conference in Bombay, Shekhar made the now famous statement that the Bofors inquiry was "the job of a police sub-inspector".

ON November 22, Shekhar appointed Subramaniam Swamy as the law and justice minister. The following day, Swamy, a maverick politician trying to curry favour with the Congress(I), made the first move in a strategy to stall the Bofors case. He accepted additional solicitor-general Arun Jaitley's resignation from the three-man special investigating team (SIT) that included Bhure Lal, joint secretary in the PMO, and K. Madhavan, CBI joint director. The team has been diligently pursuing the case for the past 11 months. It was through SIT's efforts that Swiss courts accepted that the payments made to the secret accounts were bribes, though the same was being debated in Indian courts. Said V.P. Singh: "Instead of running a malicious campaign against the team, the Government should have rewarded it for its work."

But dismantling this key team and burying the case legally is what could be inferred from many of the moves initiated by the law minister. This went against the promises made by Shekhar that the investigations will not be interfered with. If at all the Government had been honest, it would have retained Jaitley like Soli Sorabjee has been in the Carbide case. Although it was possible for the interested parties to scuttle the investigations through a political decision, they refrained knowing that it would spell political suicide.

The impetus for wanting to kill the controversial case lay 6,500 km away, in Switzerland, specifically in the two Swiss cantonal courts of Geneva and Zurich, which had started investigations at the request of the Singh government. The papers released by them related to the bank accounts used to receive the payoffs. It was a major breakthrough for the CBI that would help it in unravelling the mystery. For



Chandra Shekhar

Hedging

In 1987: "Rajiv Gandhi faced the prospect of being blackmailed by foreign powers."

November 12, 1990: "The inquiry is the job of a sub-inspector and not of the prime minister."

November 16: "We will not conceal any information."

December 8: "Bofors has become a pathological problem for some politicians. It is to be investigated by the agencies and they are free to pursue their line."



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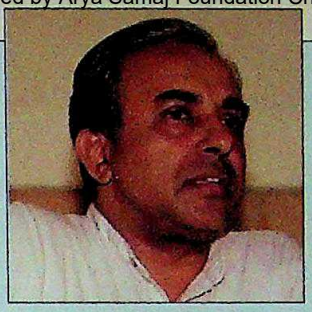
...ance, the A.E. Services account was ...a conduit to receive the money and, ...ording to the documents, the money ...s transferred to Colbar Investments ...Geneva via a now untraceable Jorda... ...n agent. Possibly, the Colbar account ...s also been frozen by the Swiss court. ...r if the Swiss Government gets con... ...nced that India is disinterested, they ...uld immediately stop the investiga... ...ns—slush money from a Third World ...untry stashed away in its banks isn't ...r kind of publicity they relish.

MEANWHILE, deprived of Jaitley, the CBI, which had asked the Supreme Court to transfer to ...lf the two petitions filed in Delhi and ...jarat high courts to quash the FIR, ...ed to get the additional solicitor-gen... ...ls, Santosh Hegde and Kapil Sibal, to ...ague on its behalf. But their services too ...ere terminated. On November 29, the ...per court rejected the CBI plea and the ...se reverted to Justice Chawla's court, ...here it was filed on August 18 by a ...lhi lawyer, Harinder Singh ...owdhary *(see box)*. Representing ...owdhary was K.G. Bhagat, a former ...ditional solicitor-general during Indi... ...Gandhi's tenure.

Justice Chawla, who retires on January 5, 1991, has been, according to legal luminary Ram Jethmalani, "in a tremendous hurry" to settle the case. Concurs advocate P.N. Lekhi: "This case is before a judge who wants to hand a favourable judgement to the petitioner before he retires." The Chawla family has had close links with the Congress(I); Chawla's father was the convener of the All India Congress Legal Cell during the Emergency.

Worse, despite Shekhar's pronouncements that bureaucrats would not be changed, Swamy on December 2, accepted the resignations of attorney general Soli Sorabjee, solicitor-general Ashok Desai and other legal officials. His appointees included:

- ► Attorney General G. Ramaswamy: He was the solicitor-general during Rajiv Gandhi's time and had handled cases, such as the Fairfax and the Thakkar-Natarajan Commission. He has also advised the Hindujas and the Bachchans in the Bofors case.
- ► Solicitor-General Anand Dev Giri: He is said to have access to Shekhar, as he is an old friend and classmate.
- ► Additional Solicitor-General K.T.S. Tulsi: He has a close rapport with Swamy and S.S. Ray. When Ray was Punjab governor, Tulsi was appointed



Subramaniam Swamy

Diverting

December 9, 1990: "Mr Singh had been to Sweden to discuss the Bofors issue on June 10, 1986 and held closed-door meetings on the Bofors deal. Till today he has not taken the country into confidence as to what he discussed. It is well known that Mr Nehru had been a key figure in the negotiations from the beginning."

"K. Madhavan behaved in a highly irresponsible manner.

"As a government servant he had no right to make a public display of what seems like a synthetic outrage."

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special public prosecutor.

Waking up to the grim situation, the opposition parties filed applications for impleadment in the Chowdhary petition stating that they apprehended that the Government might not oppose the petition vigorously enough. Justice Chawla refused to pass any order.

CHARGING that Justice Chawla would not be impartial, the Janata Dal submitted a special leave petition in the Supreme Court on December 7 through advocate Prashant Bhushan. It gave instances of how Justice Chawla had heard the case in September, shelving all other pressing cases.

Meanwhile, a PMO record revealed that before he appeared in court, Tulsi was briefed by Ramaswamy and reportedly instructed to pull down the Bofors case made out by the CBI. The result: an unsavoury and acrimonious drama.

Consider the exchange on December 5 between Justice Chawla, Tulsi, counsel for the Government, and Lekhi, representing the BJP.

Tulsi: *(referring to the impleadment appeal)* "The political parties are misusing the judicial machinery."

Lekhi: *(addressing Justice Chawla)* "This lawyer has taken instructions from G. Ramaswamy, who has been advising the Hindujas, the prime suspects in the Bofors deal."

Justice Chawla: *(admonishing Lekhi)* "Shut up!"

Lekhi: "I take strong exception to this...."

Justice Chawla: "I'm sorry."

More melodrama followed the next day. In just two hours, Tulsi demolished the rationale for the FIR filed by the CBI in the Bofors case. Seeing his one year's work coming to naught, Madhavan stood up.

Madhavan: "I would like permission to speak directly to the court."

Justice Chawla: "Don't you have a counsel? Whatever you have to say, say it through your counsel."

Madhavan: "It is about the counsel that I want to tell the court...."

Justice Chawla: *(leaving the court)* "No, that cannot be allowed."

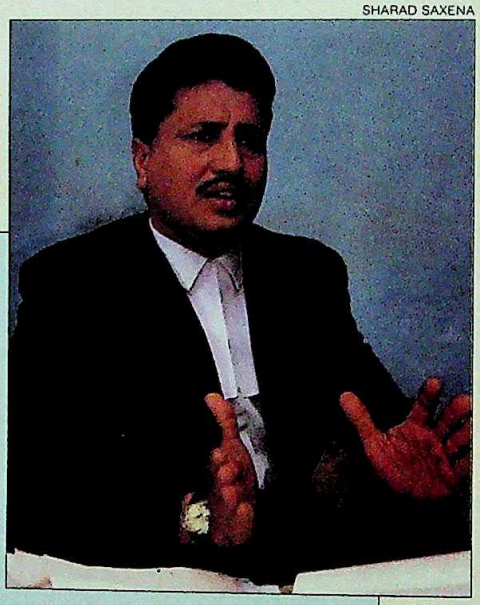
Madhavan's outburst, however, had the desired effect. Newspapers reported the incident in graphic detail. Two junior lawyers assisting Tulsi resigned. Swamy retreated and acquiesced to the demand of the CBI and the PMO to repalce Tulsi with Giri in the case. Observers feel that the prime minister may have revised his earlier strategy because, by keeping the Bofors case hanging as a Damocles' sword over Rajiv Gandhi, he can get concessions from the Congress(I).

Unrepentant, Swamy defended Tulsi who, he clarified, represented the Union of India and not the CBI, and accused Madhavan who "had acted in a highly irresponsible manner". Swamy then accused the CBI of not producing any results in 11 months. Tulsi was removed, he said, because he had been "threatened with physical violence". Countered Kirti Singh, counsel for the CPI(M): "By defending Tulsi, who clearly argued for the petitioner, Swamy is either not stating the truth or the Government's stand is also that of the petitioner."

But the Supreme Court's favourable decision on the Opposition's special leave petitions for impleadment will definitely change the course of events in the Bofors litigation. Said former law minister, Shanti Bhushan: "Any risk of a hastily reached order has been stopped by the Supreme Court." The Janata Dal and its allies were also considering a move in Parliament to impeach Justice Chawla.

Clearly, the Opposition's concerted efforts have given the Bofors case a kiss of life. This has saved whatever the SIT could find in legal jungles, a success that has eluded even the American team investigating Marcos' millions. At least for the time being.

SHARAD SAXENA



H.S. CHOWDHARY

Proxy War

FROM tinsel town super heroes to religious con men, the line-up of those drawn into the Bofors imbroglio has been like a star-studded cast. By comparison, Harinder Singh Chowdhary, a small-time lawyer handling petty criminal cases in the Delhi Sessions Court, almost seems lacklustre. Chowdhary, the latest person to make an entry on the Bofors stage, has moved a petition for the quashing of the Bofors investigation.

In the first 'public interest litigation' of his 10-year-old career, Chowdhary is demanding that the CBI's FIR in the Bofors case be quashed. Interestingly, the 35-year-old Jat from Ghaziabad originally filed the petition soon after the names of S.P. Hinduja and Jubilee Finance Incorporated surfaced in Geneva in connection with the Bofors deal.

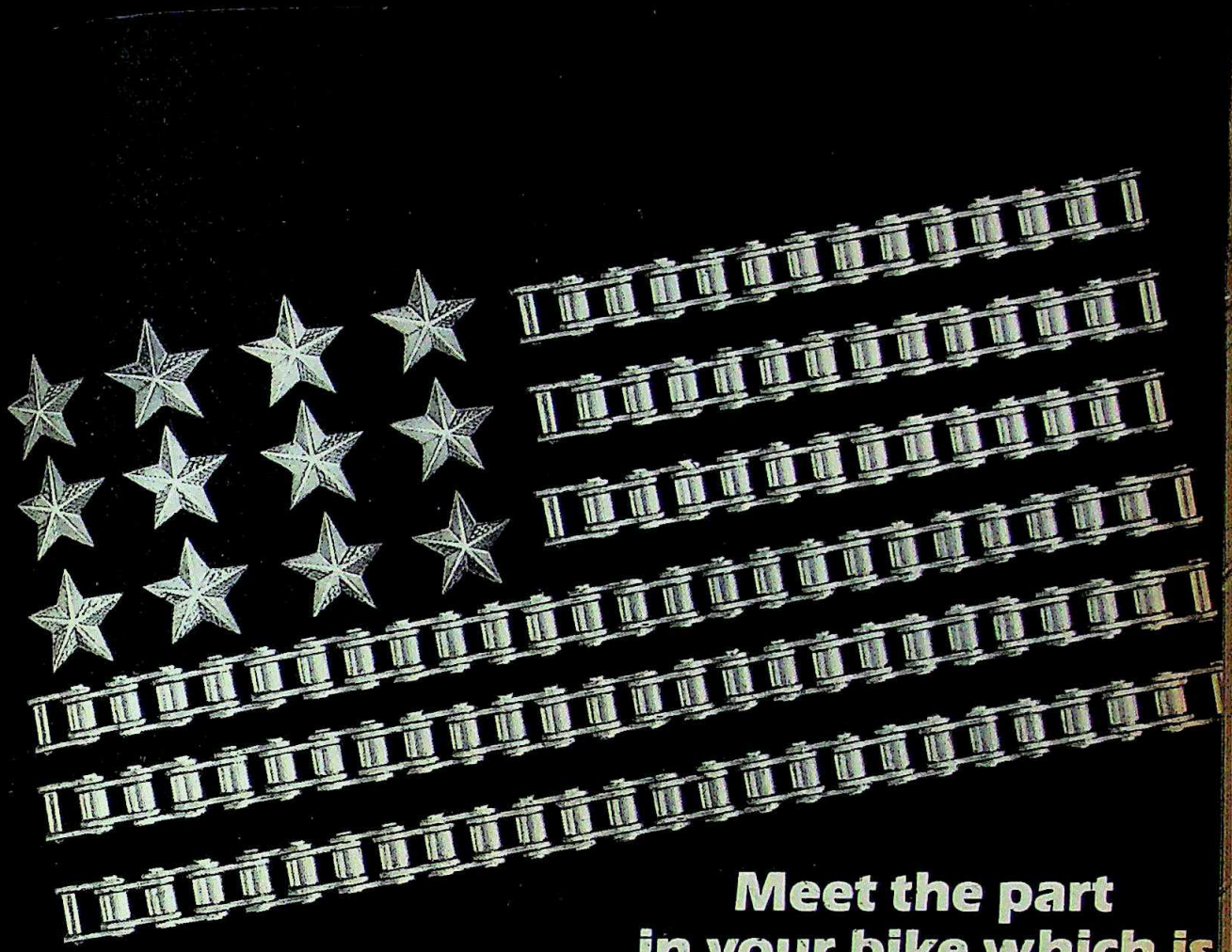
What is intriguing is the motive behind Chowdhary's petition. He claims to have been "with the Janata Party in the past and now with the Janata Dal". Then why is he acting against them now? His attempt at explaining the contradiction says nothing: "V.P. Singh was made the prime minister by the media only. There was no leader of the Janata Dal when it came into existence. I plan to do research on how V.P. Singh and Bofors are creations of the media."

Though he dismisses any suggestion of being a Congressman, fellow advocates disclose that Chowdhary is associated with Hans Raj Bharadwaj, the deputy law minister during Rajiv Gandhi's regime. He also denies the allegation that he may have been paid by the Hindujas to lodge this petition.

The question then is: how did he get possession of the confidential court order of the Geneva Cantonal Court, with the name of S.P. Hinduja? And why were the names of Hinduja and Jubilee Finance deleted in the copy he presented to the court? Chowdhary has no answers, adding another piece to the unwieldy Bofors puzzle.

—W.P.S. SIDHU

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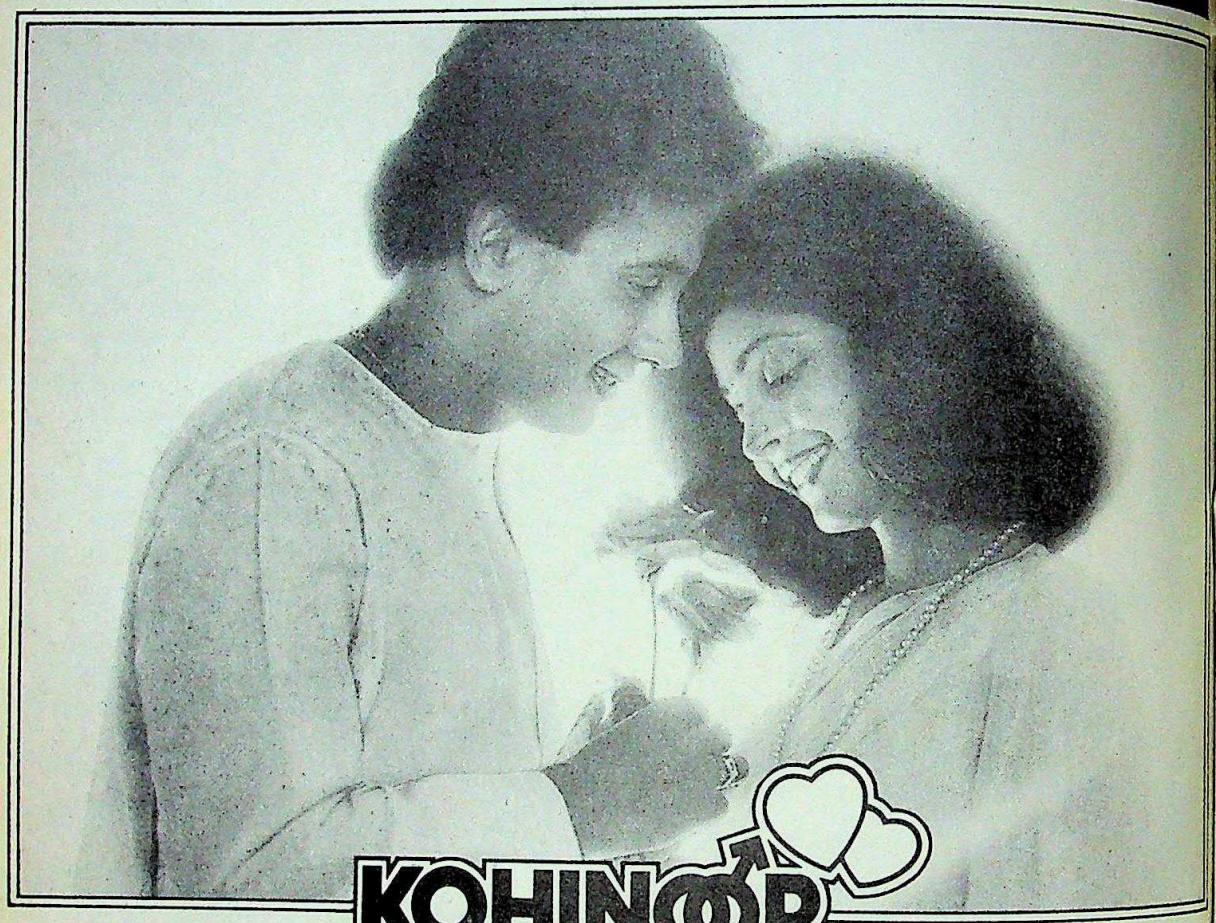
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Reddy comforting injured children

ANDHRA PRADESH

Riot Ravaged

Reddy's position is tenuous



AS the people of Hyderabad try to come to terms with the latest communal bloodletting, the question on everyone's lips is: has Chief Minister Chenna Reddy lost his grip? The next question is: will he go voluntarily or will he have to be pushed?

Reddy was surprised both at the extent of the violence and the hostile reaction to the way his ministry dealt with it. Women were burned alive and children stabbed. In the first few days, the number of dead had reached over 80. One of his ministers, N. Srinivasulu Reddy, resigned in protest.

And Reddy's exit did seem on the cards, even as the Government launched a damage limitation exercise. The Minister of State for Home Affairs, Subodh Kant Sahay, told journalists: "We hope we'll effectively control the situation." His words failed to convince anyone. The sounds of discontent within the Congress(I) over Reddy's rule could be heard loud and clear on December 3—his Government's first anniversary. A group of 28 MLAs put out a statement saying that the anniversary marked a deterioration in law and order, referring to the spurt in Naxalite activities.

Igniting last fortnight's violence was the stabbing of Majid Khan, an activist in the Majlis Ittehadul Muslimeen Party. On December 9, the army was called into the old city. But the killings continued. "Only the law of the jungle prevails in the state," thundered former chief minister, N.T. Rama Rao, whose reign was relatively free of communal trouble.

But even before the riots, Reddy was in trouble over the recrudescence of Naxalite violence. Alarmingly, the victims claimed by the Naxalites rose from 62 in 1988 to 200 this year. When Reddy took office, he came to an agreement with the Andhra Pradesh Civil Liberties Group that 134 imprisoned Naxalites would be freed. The front organisation of the various Naxalite factions was also allowed to hold public meetings, previously banned by the Rama Rao ministry. The Naxalites took this as a green light to expand their campaign. Kidnappings, attacks on police stations and killings ensued.

Reddy compounded his problems by his decision to scrap the 1,100 mandals and revive the larger taluks which were abolished by Rama Rao. MLAs were up in arms at the decision. Reddy ignored the opposition.

And now he may have to pay for it. Clearly, his days are numbered. His opponents within the Congress(I) are determined to persuade Rajiv Gandhi to dismiss him. Although they realise that Rajiv has a lot on his plate at the moment, particularly in Uttar Pradesh, they're confident the communal bloodbath in Hyderabad will be enough to get his attention and clinch their case. —AMARNATH K. MENON

BIHAR

Pure Excess

Laloo ministry balloons



AFTER nine months of struggling with a mouse of a ministry, Bihar Chief Minister Laloo Prasad Yadav has finally pumped it up into a wheezing, obese mammoth. From nine cabinet ministers, including the chief minister, and three ministers of state (which arch-rival Raghunath Jha walked out of to form the Janata Dal(S) party) which comprised the smallest-ever ministry, Yadav executed a quantum leap and added to his luggage 26 cabinet-rank ministers, 30 ministers of state and nine deputy ministers, marking up a grand total of 76. While he has made a substantial cross-section of supporters happy, detractors are busy predicting that his ministry will soon collapse under its own blubber.

Yadav faced flak from day one. On the day of the swearing-in, two walked out in protest, two others refused to accept their posts, and two stayed out of Patna. And yet Yadav promised more, declaring: "If necessary, I will have more ministers."

That's a promise he doesn't have to keep. He has cunningly roped in all the dissent he can handle: about 56 per cent of the 116 MLAs and 11 MLCs who comprise the Janata Dal Legislature

Cartoon by JAYANTO



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Party. But the beefing up appalled his supporters as well, including the state unit of the CPI, his closest ally, which issued a harshly-worded statement describing the expansion as a "display of spineless opportunism".

The rumour is rife that Yadav will go further and accommodate the rest of the Janata Dal's 57 legislators as chairmen and vice-chairmen of various boards and corporations. Out of 63 backward legislators, 31 have been made ministers; from among the 28 forward caste legislators, 18 have a place in the ministry; eight out of 12 Muslims have been rewarded, as have 11 of the 22 Harijans and both the tribal legislators. Such a toss-up had never been seen before.

Meanwhile the state bureaucracy is terrified: soon an army of ministers will move in to divest senior bureaucrats of their comfortable chambers in the secretariat. In any case, half the officials, in a city that cannot accommodate them, are living in transit flats, hostels and circuit houses. A tantrum here and there and many bureaucrats will find themselves on the streets.

Further, officials expect cabinet meetings to be chaotic: the present cabinet room has the capacity to accommodate just 25 ministers whereas there are now 35 cabinet rankers, backed during meetings by an army of ministers of state and their minions. Quipped an official: "The cabinet meetings will have to be held in the open lawns or in Gandhi Maidan."

So where will the finances for the ministers come from? The estimated budget expenditure of Rs 1,805 crore was slashed to Rs 1,391 crore. Even out of this, only Rs 594 crore could be released to various departments. According to secretariat sources, hardly Rs 325 crore have actually been spent on developmental activities.

For the past nine months, Bihar has been plagued by upheavals of various kinds, including the Mandal imbroglio. The Government, virtually at a standstill, could mop up internal resources only to the tune of Rs 519 crore. Last fortnight, the RBI flatly warned the Government either to gear up its resource collection machinery and slash its profligate expenditure or face suspension of payments from the RBI.

The opposition has already got into gear. Those who walked out of the swearing-in or refused to take oath have begun mobilising the grousers. In any case merely a jumbo-sized ministry cannot handle Bihar's jumbo-sized problems. —FARZAND AHMED

Kumar Pal's Choice

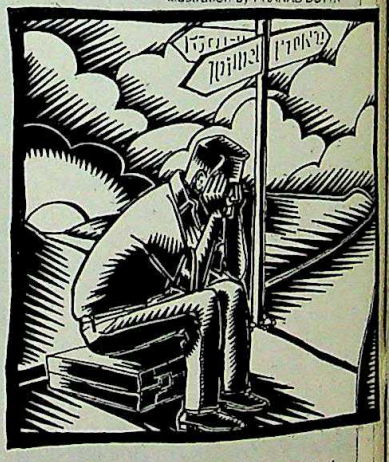
INSIDE EYE BY INDERJIT BADHWAR

THEY were at it again, last week, at a rally in Delhi—V.P. Singh and his band of vote bank wizards whipping up Mandalmania to a feverish pitch. Mandal, they told us, is not really about jobs. Nor money. But rather a device to transfer a perpetual quota of power to a caste alliance.

I thought about Kumar Pal, an intense and driven Harijan youth. We met two years ago. Born in the misery of a share-cropping family in Kachchla, a village nestled in the sandy wastes of a bend in the Ganges on Uttar Pradesh's Etah-Badaun border, Kumar was one of a few to finish schooling in the grubby *pathshala* there. Education intoxicated him. He read by the full moon, by candle light. He taught himself English. And overcoming horrendous odds and the private hell that only an indigent ambitious Harijan can know, Kumar gained admission to Uttar Pradesh's prestigious agricultural university at Pant Nagar.

When I first met him he had just graduated—a topper. He spoke halting but good English. Dressed in one of two white shirts (washed spotless) that he owned, and a pair of grey trousers, held together at his waist by safety pins, his hair freshly massaged with mustard oil and slicked back, he talked animatedly of 'tissue culture', 'haploid species', and genetic engineering. He brimmed with the confidence of a young man bursting with the energy of knowledge. The sky was the limit. But he was uneasy. He had applied for further studies to a prominent agricultural institute in Delhi under the Schedule Castes quota but suspected influence-peddling by some politically connected competitor might deprive him of his opportunity. He needed help to prevent this. But the system proved too powerful. A candidate with "pull" who had scored less than Kumar in the written test was pushed ahead of him in the interview and qualified.

Illustration by PRANAB DUTTA



Kumar was heartbroken. Forlorn, but not bitter, he went home to Kachchla and returned every fortnight to Delhi, flashing his degree, to knock at every door. And one opened. A prominent company doing high-tech agricultural research and development hired Kumar at Rs 2,500 a month as a junior scientist. Kumar's *tapasya* had paid off.

Three months later, to the disappointment of his company's managers who were impressed with his brilliance, Kumar disappeared. And on a visit to his village, I inquired after his welfare. His father informed me Kumar was in Lucknow. What on earth was he doing there when he was holding a job in Delhi? There was an uneasy silence. He has got a job there, but was embarrassed to tell his company about it, the father said. What job?

Kumar's father explained that his son had taken an entrance exam for the state's sales tax department under the reserved quota and had qualified. But, I stammered, what about all the training he's had, his love for agriculture and experimenting and new technology?

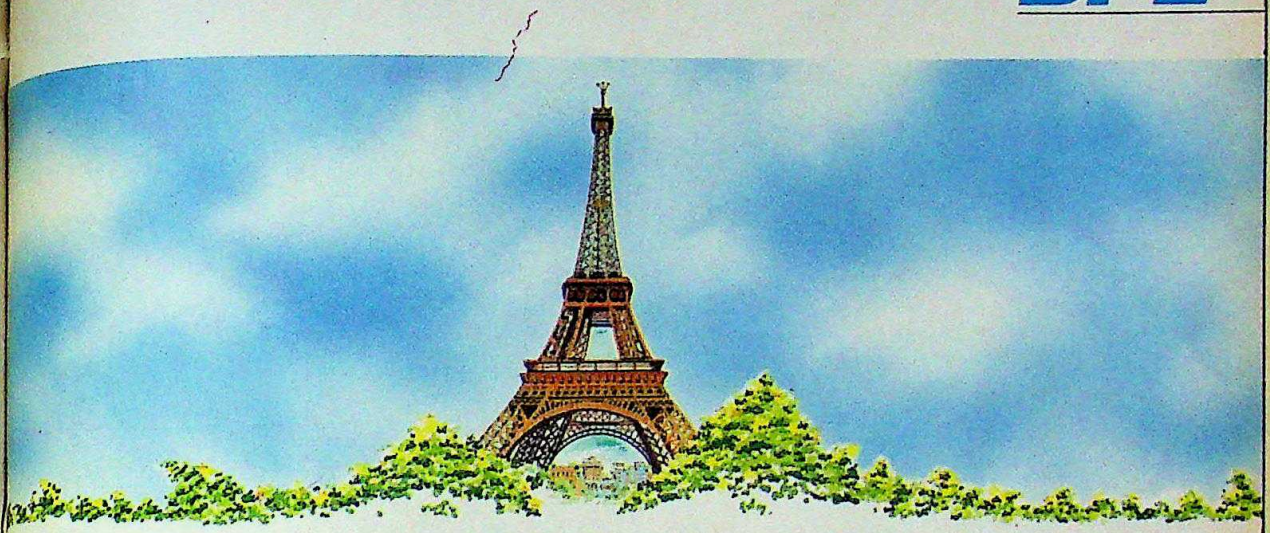
The father looked me straight in the eye: "*Izzat aur chain ki zindagi bhi is naukri mein kafi hai. Aur usse bhi zyada, chaprasi to usko salaam karenge*" (This job will guarantee him respect and security. But more than that at least peons will now salute him). He had his reasons.

Today in light of the Mandal controversy, I think often about Kumar's decision. Did the cause of social justice gain momentum by Kumar's plunge into the reserved bureaucracy, or did our nation lose a potentially brilliant agricultural scientist? Kumar's choice could not have been without pain.

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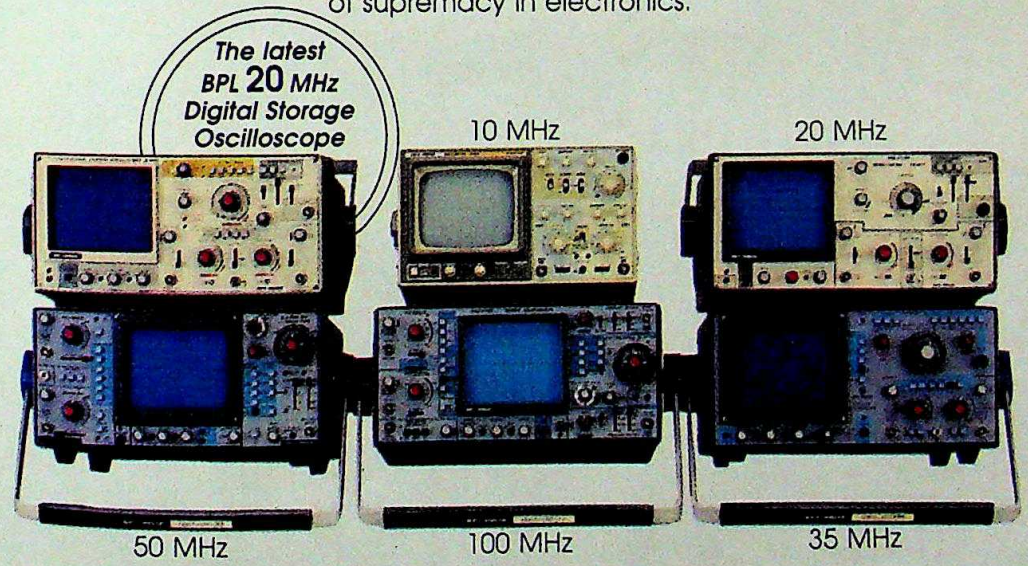
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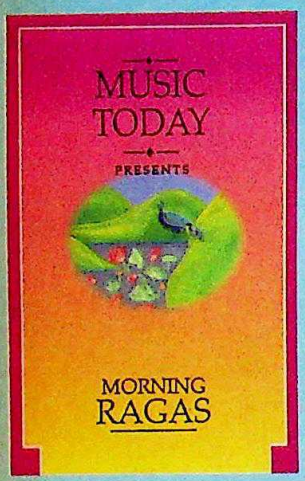
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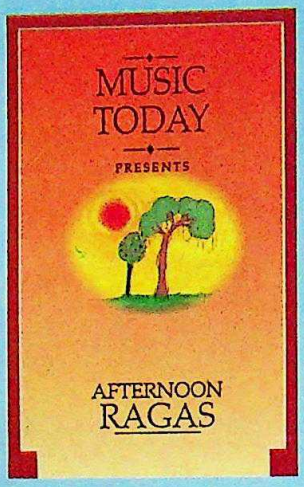


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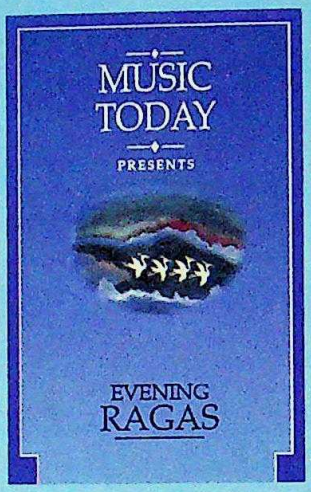


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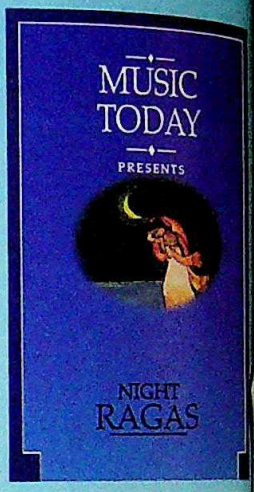


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RAJIV GANDHI

Skirting the Issues



As the leader of the largest party in Parliament on whose sole support the Chandra Shekhar Government continues in power, Rajiv Gandhi should be performing a high-visibility political act, preparing the groundwork to create the most favourable conditions for the Congress(I) to seize the maximum advantage from a mid-term poll. Instead, as the events of the past few weeks have shown, Rajiv seems to have found an uncomfortable niche in the wings.

More than politicking, what has occupied a fair portion of Rajiv's time is his fight to retain his position as leader of the Opposition. Already, this status has been claimed by the BJP's L.K. Advani who has written to the Speaker asking that, according to the Constitution, he should be accorded that post because, with 86 MPs, the BJP is the largest opposition group. But Rajiv has filed a counter claim, insisting that he continues to qualify as opposition leader because the Congress(I)'s support to the Government is only on "constructive issues". Moreover, as only the Congress(I) can topple the ruling group, it should be treated as an opposition party.

Apart from splitting hairs on such technicalities and the attendant worries of losing his official residence and the perks that go with that position, it has been a month of relative indecisiveness and inaction for Rajiv. While adversaries like V.P. Singh and Advani have already hit the electoral stump in the Hindi belt and in the south, Rajiv has confined himself to the fortress-like 10, Janpath, official residence of the leader of the opposition party. For him and his party it was the most demoralising scenario.

This is in sharp contrast to his countrywide peregrinations just a month ago when he was hogging the newspaper headlines with his sadbhavana yatras taking on the V.P. Singh government head-on. Even two months ago the outlook for the Congress(I) was brightening. During the last days of V.P. Singh's disastrous rule, Rajiv's barnstorming drew huge ecstatic crowds. Moreover, during the first three weeks in October, Rajiv seemed to have restored his old rapport with the masses. His message had a strong, positive element of concern, and it hit home when he visited areas of communal and caste riots.

Today, instead of personal visits, he is content with despatching teams of party leaders to riot-ravaged areas like Aligarh and Hyderabad. He is visible only at private dinners such as one recently hosted by the Gujarat Chief Minister Chimanbhai Patel.

While his adversaries hit the electoral stump, Rajiv continues in a state of inertia.

And now Prime Minister Chandra Shekhar is beating Rajiv to the headlines as he addresses major national issues or reshuffles his bureaucracy. Rajiv rarely meets him. Surprisingly, Chandra Shekhar, without any cohesive organisational support on the ground was actively making his presence felt in Orissa, Uttar Pradesh and Bihar last fortnight, addressing large gatherings. V.P. Singh had visited Bihar, Maharashtra, Kerala and Tamil Nadu making scathing attacks on the Congress(I) and the BJP. Advani was not to be left behind as he covered the entire south and Uttar Pradesh. It was clear that Rajiv and his party were losing the initiative to their opponents. In fact, Rajiv's only sojourn was an inconsequential trip to the flood-hit areas of Orissa.

Rajiv's predicament is obvious. When the chips are really down he finds himself unable to take a well-defined position. As a consequence the Congress(I) has nothing but inane ambiguities on the burning issues of the day. With the BJP and the Janata Dal spoiling for a decisive fight on Mandir and Masjid respectively, the party is left without a plank. On these major issues its position is that of a bystander while others have taken positions in the ring.

Last fortnight as V.P. Singh gave the call for a pro-Mandal agitation and as the BJP-VHP combine started the second phase of the Ayodhya campaign, the Congress(I) was torn about the course of action it should adopt. Neither could the party carry out a campaign for the acceptance of the modifications it suggested on the Mandal issue, nor was there a consensus within it on the Ayodhya issue.

In the absence of clear thinking in the Central leadership and without an overriding issue, the party has started speaking in different voices: leaders of the party in Uttar Pradesh favour construction of the temple; the 'Rajiv Gandhi formula', while incorporating this demand insists on a judicial committee to determine the antiquity of the shrine: senior party leader Vasant Sathe urges Muslims to hand over the mosque to the Hindus.

And, in a dramatic reversal of roles, V.P. Singh soon after dumping the dregs of his bowl on to Rajiv's plate, is assuming a superior moral position and projecting himself as the victim of the Congress(I)-BJP-Chandra Shekhar conspiracy.

The party certainly cannot hope to emerge from the political maelstrom in the country unless it takes clear stands on the major issues of the day. However, that would require a display of both courage and vision. Merely wishing for the wave of stability to carry it back to power may be somewhat like waiting for Godot. The lesson of politics is not just creating but seizing opportunities.

—BHASKAR ROY

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TAMIL NADU

Tiger Trouble

DMK accused of laxness



ATTACK is the best form of defence, judging by the behaviour of Chief Minister M. Karunanidhi. Ever since the fall of V.P. Singh's government, the Centre—largely at the instigation of the Congress(I)—has been holding a gun to his head over his alleged inaction over the Tamil Tigers in the state. Rather than wait passively for the trigger to be pulled, he's hit the road to explain himself to the people.

Accompanied on part of the campaign by Singh, the DMK supremo covered over 850 km by road and addressed over a dozen meetings, attended by a million people. The turnout was good and the welcome enthusiastic. If the Congress(I) wanted to beat him with the Tamil Tigers stick, so be it. Karunanidhi would play the Mandal card. His speeches were littered with references to the Congress(I) as an enemy of the backward castes.

SHYAM TEKWANI



Karunanidhi: defensive move

Notwithstanding his bold response, Karunanidhi and the DMK know that the threat to his 23-month-old Government is real enough. Though he enjoys the support of a two-thirds majority in the state Assembly, hardly a day goes by without an attack on him from the Centre.

The main thrust of the accusations made by the Congress(I) and the opposition AIADMK is that Karunanidhi has been soft on the LTTE and provided them with money. These were voiced during a confidence motion debate in Parliament when Prime Minister Chandra Shekhar issued a blunt warning to the chief minister—improve the law and order situation or else.

This made Karunanidhi panic a little. He took the bull by the horns and gave the Centre details of an action plan he had devised to deal with the Tigers. But when BJP President L. K. Advani also took the opportunity of a visit to the state to demand a white paper on the LTTE's presence in Tamil Nadu, Karunanidhi decided it was high time he visited Delhi himself. At a meeting with Chandra Shekhar on December 3, he denied that the presence of LTTE cadres was having an effect on law and order.

The chief minister seemed satisfied with the outcome of the meeting, saying: "The prime minister is a seasoned politician. Before taking any decision, he will assess the situation in Tamil Nadu very carefully."

Though he seems to have won some breathing space, Karunanidhi is nevertheless gearing up for elections. That's why he decided to hit the road. As a part of the pre-election campaign, he announced at the end of October that electricity would be supplied free to agricultural pump sets irrespective of whether they belonged to big or small farmers. Then, he slashed the price of rice in the public distribution system from Rs 3.25 to Rs 2.50.

The cost to the state exchequer was Rs 89 crore. But any anxiety about the effect this might have on the state's budget—already in deficit—has been put aside for the moment. The next populist measure to be announced was a cheap housing scheme for Adi Dravidas. Details of this will be spread during a Rath Yatra which Karunanidthi has planned for early January. His rath will be in the shape of a low-cost house.

The Congress(I) was most unimpressed by the measures. TNCC(I) President, Vazhapadi Ramamurthy, dismissing the efforts said: "He should try to be a little more original if he hopes to seduce the voters."

But Karunanidhi was oblivious to such sarcasm as he toured the state generating pre-election excitement. His star performer on the early election trail was V.P. Singh, who happened to be paying a two-day visit to the state. He obligingly gave thunderous endorsements to the DMK regime.

Singh's visit provided a welcome respite and morale boost to Karunanidhi. But he has also drawn comfort from the inability of the Congress(I) Government in neighbouring Andhra Pradesh to prevent ferocious communal riots in Hyderabad. The next time he comes under pressure from the Congress(I), he can afford to tell them to set their own house in order before condemning others.

—ANAND VISWANATHAN

GOA

Odd Liaisons

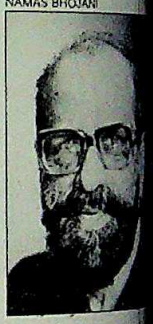
Instability as Barbosa exits



IN the corridors of Panaji's 16th century Secretariat building, the constantly shifting alliances between Goa's politicians are now being compared to the impermanent marriages of Bombay's film stars.

Only last March the Congress(I) government led by Pratapsinh Rane was brought down when Luis Proto Barbosa walked out with six other legislators of the 40-member Assembly. He set up the Goa People's Party and formed the Progressive Democratic Front government in alliance with the opposition Maharashtrawadi Gomantak Party (MGP). But the two Front partners began squabbling over the spoils of office from the very first day, until MGP leader and deputy chief minister Ramakant Khalap finally withdrew support.

NAMAS BHOJANI



Barbosa: in the lurch

That was the signal for the fortnight-long political merry-go-round which left even hardened observers dismayed and dumbfounded. "In politics, it seems, rats can marry snakes and bulls can chase lizards," commented the Panaji daily *Herald*, as first Khalap sought Congress(I) support with Rane's help, then Barbosa tried to do a deal with Khalap, then Khalap won over three of Barbosa's aides, then Barbosa's group jumped onto the Congress(I) bandwagon with two MGP legislators who had gone underground. And Congress(I) Legislature Party chief Wilfred De Souza demanded of Governor Khurshid Alam Khan that his party should be invited to form the Government.

In spite of all the zeal to avoid President's Rule and another assembly election, Goa's politicians had locked themselves into a Catch-22 situation. The political farce was yet another indication that instability is spreading from the Centre to the states.

—M. RAHMAN in Panaji

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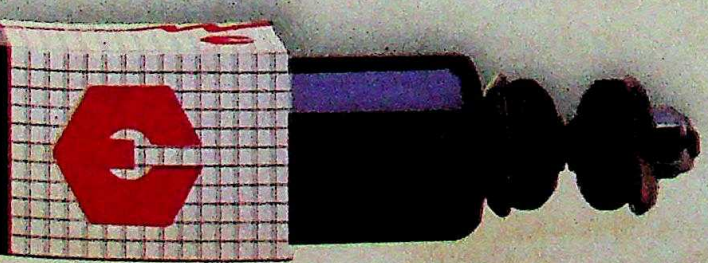
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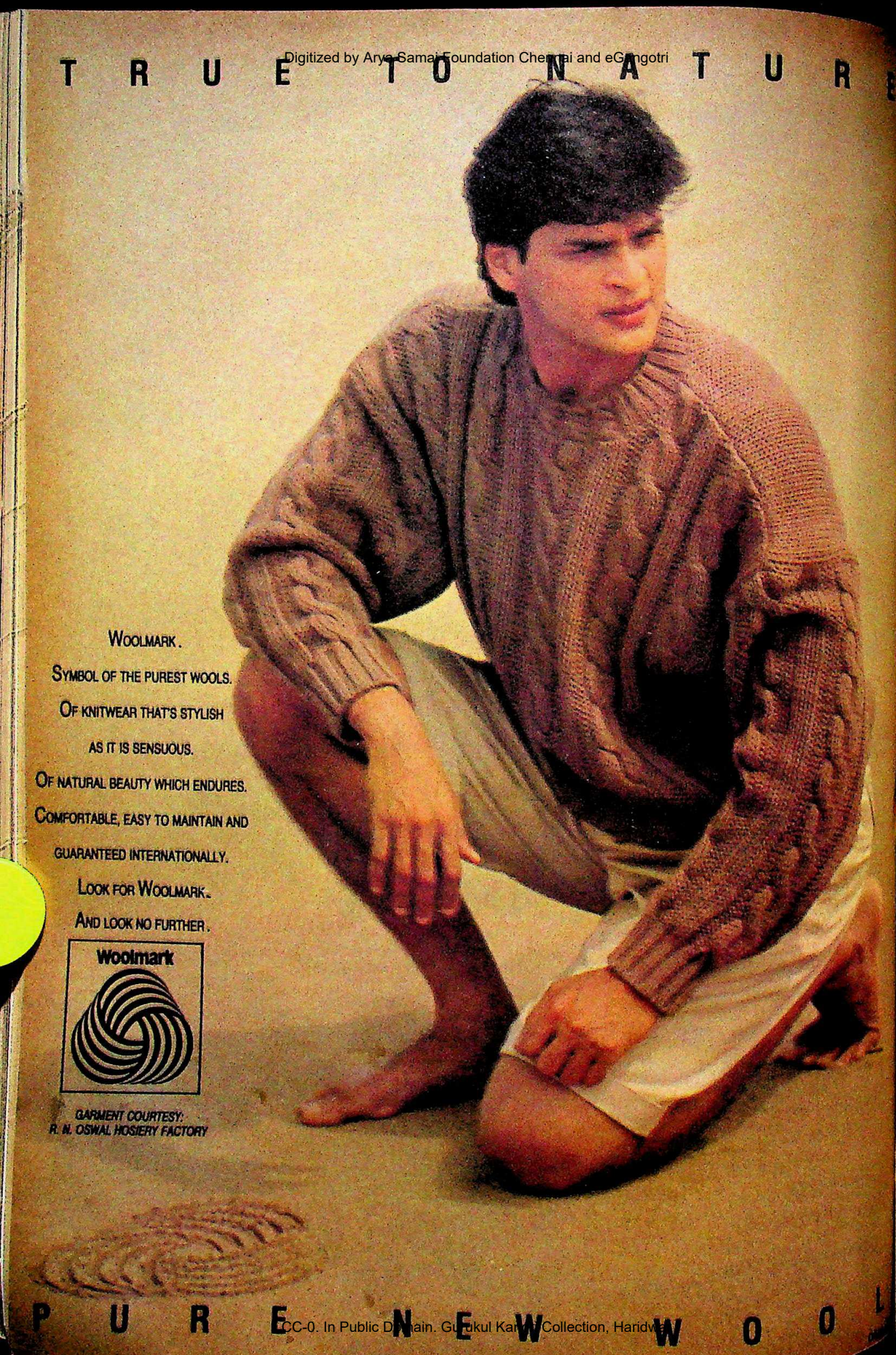


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ORISSA

Making Noise

Populism sparks off trouble

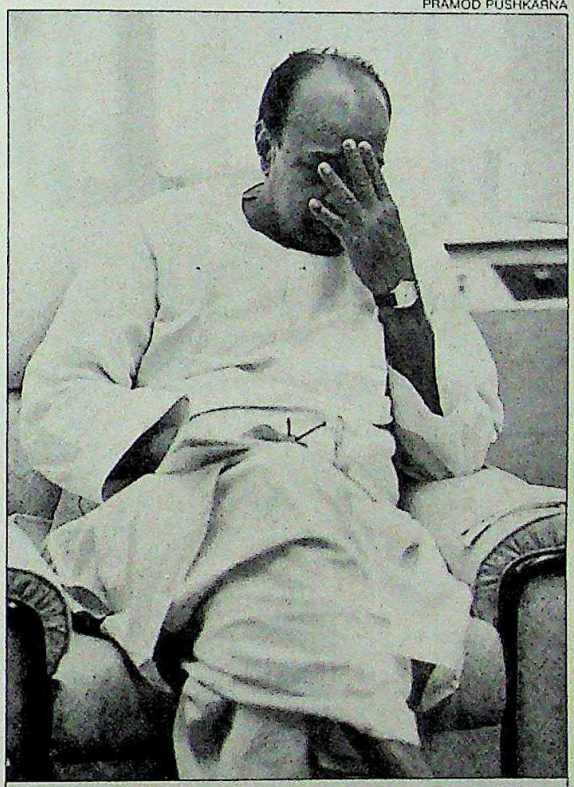
QUIRKY Biju Patnaik, Orissa's chief minister, can occasionally carry his flamboyance too far. And then have to pay the price: a bleeding nose. In recent weeks the septuagenarian Janata Dal veteran had been reiterating publicly that people should deal with corrupt officials by "bashing them up". At the press meet in the state capital he even added corrupt legislators and ministers to the list. And in a chivalric afterthought concluded: "Do not spare even me."

Soon after, at Bhawanipatna, the district headquarters of Kalahandi, an angry crowd seemed to take him up on his word. His car was stoned, and the chief minister sustained a deep cut on the nose, and swooned. He revived only after medical aid was administered. Expectedly, Congress(I) leaders in the state gloated that the old man had asked for trouble and got it.

There is a grain of truth in that. Patnaik is wont to make off-the-cuff, sweeping remarks, bearing a strong flavour of populism. Known for his impatience with rules and procedures he has tried to create for himself the image of a man in a hurry—with big things to do in a short time. Yet he has little to show for all this. The achievement card of his nine-month-old Janata Dal Government does not inspire confidence. It has belied the high expectations, and the Janata Dal popularity has been dwindling. His pet dream of setting up an integrated steel plant in the state sector has failed to take off. And his peremptory announcement doubling the minimum wages in the state from Rs 11 to Rs 25 has upset the already strained financial resources of the Government, while alienating industrialists and big farmers. There has been no significant change in the governance of the state, and the frustrated chief minister blames this on a stodgy and corrupt bureaucracy. Angered at being stymied Patnaik has been indulging in intemperate exhortations. He promised police inaction when the people were dealing with the corrupt officials, and said that no FIRs would be filed against those thrashing up the officers. What topped it all was the quixotic directive: "Every time you decide to beat up someone give me prior intimation by sending a telegram."

The people appear to have taken the licence to beat to heart, and there have been reports of officials being roughed up in many parts of the state. In Kendrapara, a block development officer was chased and stripped. In Puri, a medical officer was assaulted.

PRAMOD PUSHKARNA



Patnaik's exhortations to violence are causing ferment in the state.

Even Pradeep Maharathi, a Janata Dal MLA was assaulted at Pipli for suspected sabotage in the distribution of groundnut seeds on December 4.

While the bureaucrats and a section of the intelligentsia are alarmed by this violent trend let loose by his off-the-cuff remarks, some of the cabinet ministers seem to concur with the leader. Food and Civil Supplies Minister Biswa Bhusan Harichandan has also given his clarion call, asking consumers to gherao and intimidate dealers and retailers of essential commodities who were guilty of hoarding and black-marketing.

Law Minister Narasingh Misra, a Marxist and a reputed criminal lawyer from Bolangir, defends Patnaik's strong-arm tactic. Says Misra: "When departmental proceedings to book erring officials go on and on for years, people suffering under the official's tyranny must have options to seek immediate redressal."

But not everyone is similarly enthused. Patnaik's declaration of war against corrupt officials is being taken with a pinch of salt, especially since several senior IAS officers facing corruption charges continue to occupy key posts in the Government. One of them is Pyarimohan Mohapatra, principal secretary to the chief minister, who is facing charges in the Konarak land deal. R.K. Bhujabal, another senior IAS officer was promoted and given a key posting despite the written suggestion by Works Minister Nalini Mohanty that he be suspended for his controversial dealings as chairman of the state housing board.

Many are interpreting the chief minister's outburst of righteous indignation as essentially political in nature, in fact as a poll plank. Failing to deliver the promises made in the February assembly election he is now looking for an agenda. And he has zeroed in on corrupt bureaucrats as an effective one-point manifesto. Following the change of government at the Centre he seems to be anticipating a snap poll next year, and his whistle-stop tours of the state are seen as campaign preparations. Patnaik's ambiguous attitude towards the new government has intrigued many, and his grip over the party has become uneasy and tenuous.

But more than accolades, Patnaik has been at the receiving end of popular wrath. When the chief minister visited flood-hit Ganjam district a fortnight ago he faced a hostile crowd, and had to retreat before flying missiles and verbal abuse. The charisma seems to be fraying at the edges. But given the tainted image of Orissa's Congress(I) politicians, Biju remains the only leader of any stature.— RUBEN BANERJEE

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NAGALAND

Breaking Up

NSCN ban affects coalition



POLITICAL fortunes fluctuated again as the six-month-old coalition of the Naga People's Council (NPC) and the Congress(I) broke on December 3. Angered by what he thought was a Congress(I) attempt to undermine him, Chief Minister Vamuzo dropped two Congress(I) Cabinet members on grounds of misconduct: public health engineering minister T.N. Nguillie and rural development minister Heketo Sema. The next day the remaining 10 Congress(I) ministers resigned en bloc.

But Vamuzo remained unfazed by the break in coalition and the apprehensions of some that Nagaland might come under President's Rule as had Assam. He went ahead and inducted 12 new ministers from the NPC, which has a total strength of 35 in the 60-member Assembly.





Vamuzo (top); and S.C. Jamir: getting even

Vamuzo suspects Congress(I) chief Jamir's hand in the outlawing of the NSCN and in attempts to break the Government.

The trouble began with the Chandra Shekhar Government banning the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN)—along with the ULFA in Assam—and with the resignation of deputy chief minister I.K. Sema on November 30. (Sema said in his resignation letter he was quitting on personal grounds.) Vamuzo accused the Congress(I) of trying to break the Government and expressed the suspicion that it was behind the outlawing of the NSCN. Of course, former chief minister and state Congress(I) leader S.C. Jamir adamantly denied the charges.

Notwithstanding Jamir's protestations of goodwill towards the Vamuzo Government, it appears that the Congress(I) did have a two-pronged strategy. One was to get the NSCN banned with Vamuzo in power in a bid to drive a wedge between the two. The other was to distance itself from the decision proscribing the militant organisation

BIHAR

Rath Rites

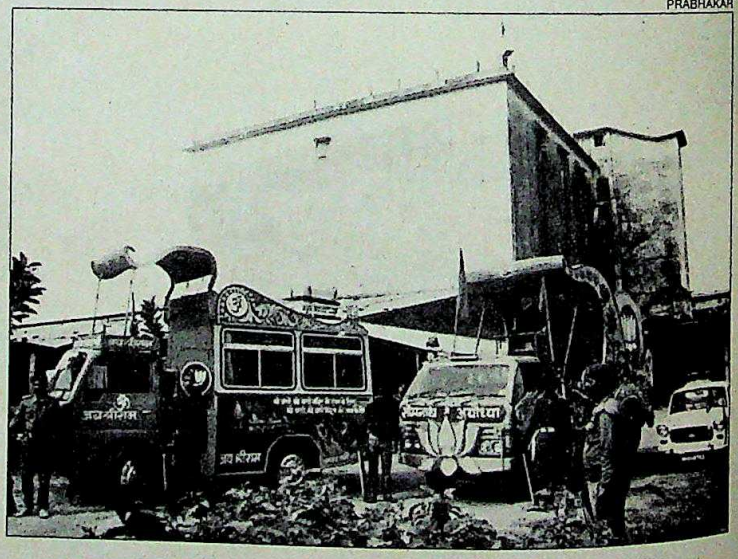
THE BJP President L.K. Advani's much-revered Valkyries, the lotus-shaped Ram raths on which he drifted through the country, have been grounded and given over to rust. For even though they were reclaimed from the heretic paws of the Bihar Government, the party decided not to use them for Advani's renewed Bharat Yatra through north Bihar last fortnight.

Yet the controversy lingers: why did Bihar Chief Minister Laloo Prasad Yadav refuse to release the raths even after Advani was freed?

While one rath has always been at the party headquarters in Patna, it was the other one impounded in Samastipur on October 23, that ran a bureaucratic gauntlet. The BJP found it had to plead with a string of top bureaucrats from the district magistrate of Samastipur through to the home commissioner and chief secretary in its efforts to retrieve the holy chariot.

The release was finally agreed upon. Two BJP representatives arrived in Samastipur on November 27 to receive it. But they found themselves facing another wall of classical bureaucratese. They were asked to state in writing that they would produce the rath whenever the state Government wanted them to.

PRABHAKAR



Advani's Rath: abandoned chariot

The motorised chariot was finally sent into cold storage. But the state Government still had not exorcised the spectre of Advani hoisting himself on to the rath for his resumed tour of Bihar, which began on November 29. Police and intelligence officials kept a hawk's eye on the rath. But by then, party leaders discovered to their dismay that its public address system was missing.

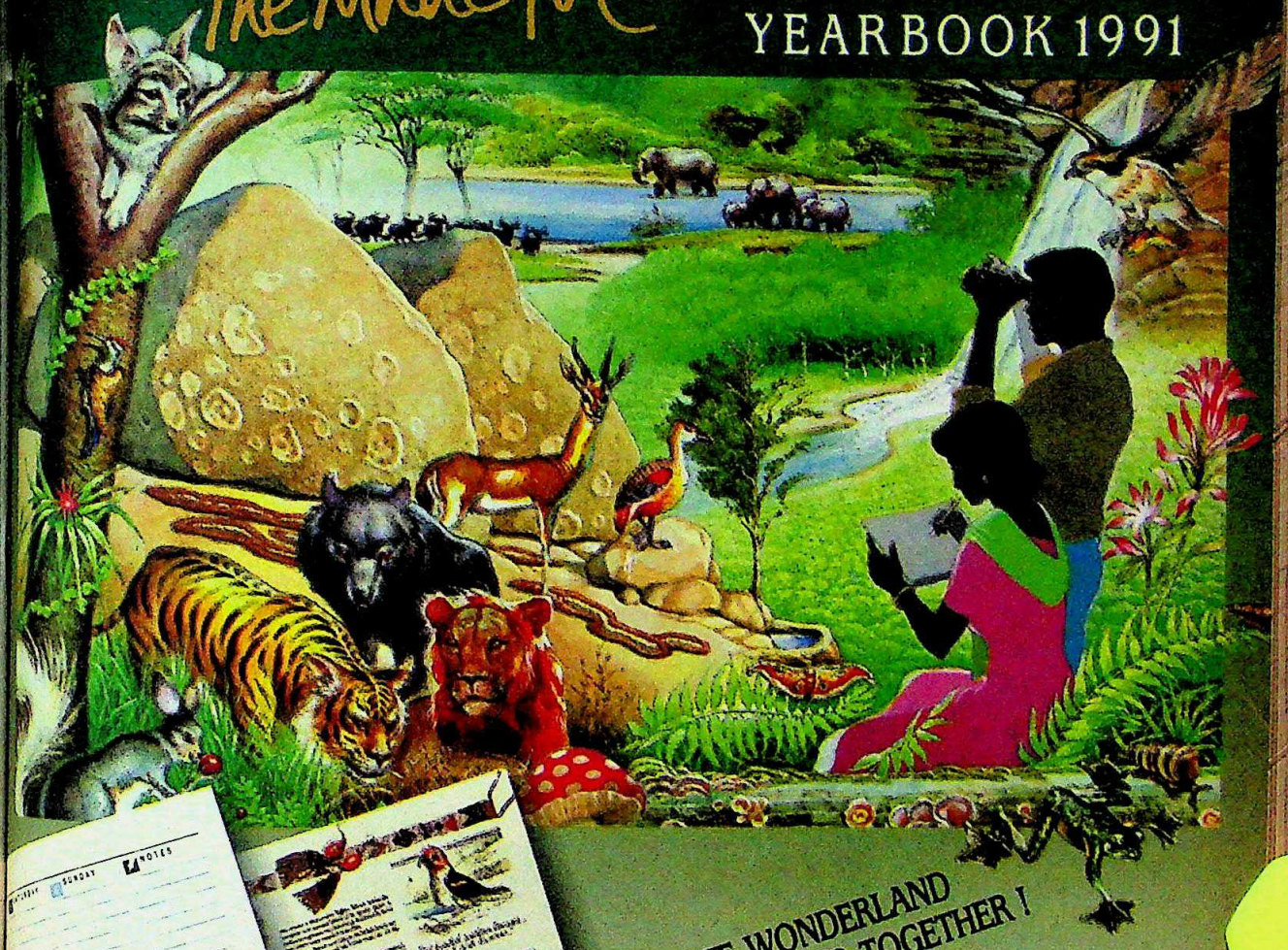
And so it goes. Exhuming and repairing the rusty raths will be too time-consuming. So the raths lie dormant till the elections, when Advani might find it necessary to ride the tiger once again.

—FARZAND AHMED

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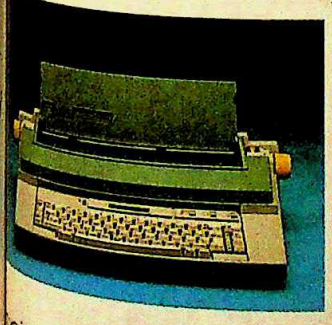
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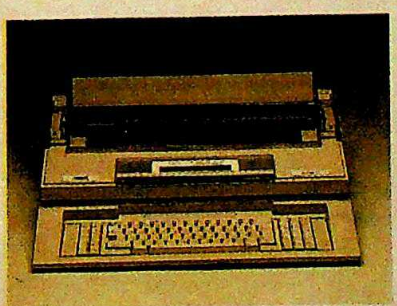
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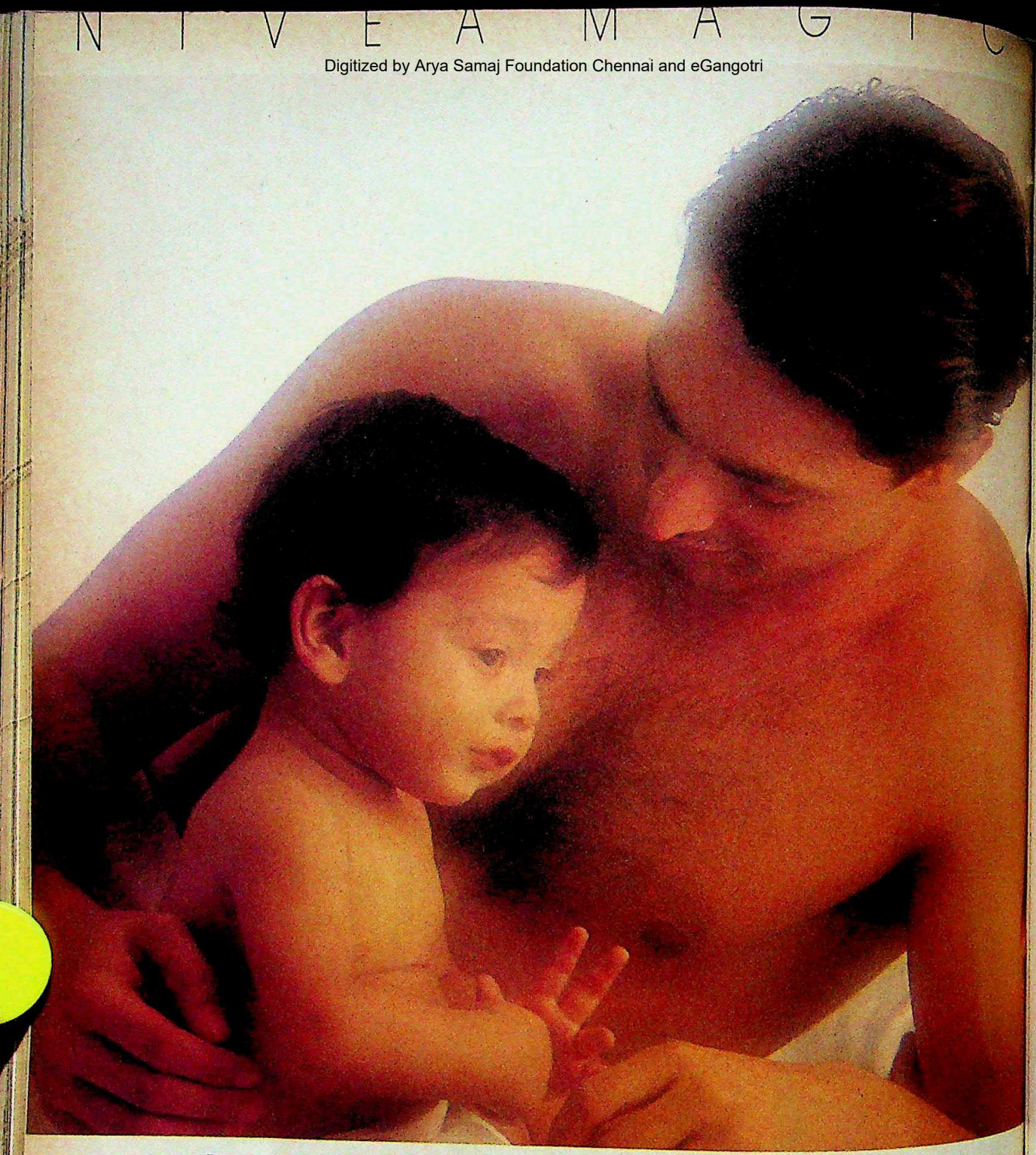
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by opting out of the ministry. But Vamuzo, anticipating the Congress(I) move, asked Nguillie to resign on grounds of misuse of funds, and Heketo Sema for filing a case in the Guwahati High Court challenging the decision of the Assembly Speaker on the disqualification of members.

The banning of the NSCN seems to have disturbed the uneasy political equilibrium in the state. The nexus between contractors, politicians and the NSCN keeps Nagaland's political wheels well oiled, and its banning has created a sense of uncertainty.

Vamuzo's ministry is the third one since the elections in January 1989 which brought in the Congress(I) and Jamir into office. However, Jamir's ministry was brought down by the defection of 12 Congress(I) members in May this year. K.L. Chisi of the NPC had then formed the United Legislature Front government with the support of the defectors. Within a month nemesis visited Chisi when 15 legislators of the NPC defected under the leadership of Vamuzo. Jamir had his revenge with the Congress(I) forming a coalition with Vamuzo.

Vamuzo's survival now depends on the Centre's discretion; and Nagaland's future is quite obviously an unstable one.

—UTTAM SENGUPTA

BOTTOMLINE BY D. BUNKER

Status Symbols

GOVERNMENTS may come and governments may go but one aspect of one-upmanship in the capital never changes—status symbols. Delhi, thanks to its Puppie Culture, is where they are born—and worn. But status symbols can also change as fast as governments. Here's a comprehensive guide to what's in and what's out this season.

IN

Goon Brigades: The ubiquitous posse of bodyguards is now *passe*. They now come in truck-loads. The 'in' thing is to have your own private goon brigade *a la* Chautala. Also useful to have around when the CBI shows up with an arrest warrant. Ask Sajjan Kumar.

Personal Astrologers: It's no longer fashionable to boast of having the same astrologer as Rajiv Gandhi or Dhirubhai Ambani. With political insecurity gripping the capital, astrologers' services are now required round the clock.

Beards: The latest thing in rural chic, or rather, cheek. Sharad Yadav and Ram Vilas Paswan started the trend which has grown rapidly since. A vote-getter if worn backwards. Additional boon to those with bad skin.

Film Baddies: Chocolate-box heros like Amitabh Bachchan are gone with the *toofan*. Political parties still need Bollywood stars as a status symbol but now, with political villainy in ascendancy, it's become *de rigueur* to have a villain (or two). Example: Shotgun Sinha and the Janata(S).

Farmhouses: Rajiv and Co laid the foundations and now you haven't arrived as a politician unless you have a farmhouse (preferably with a village post office address). Now that Bhondsi is the centre of activity, it helps to have a lake with a paddle-boat.

Escorts Heart Hospital: The 'in' place to pass out. Showing symptoms of stress is the new way to prove you are successful. Ask for a triple by-pass—it's the new buzzword in the jat set. Has other uses as Abhey Oswal demonstrated.

Car Phones: The only way to call—even if you usually can't get through. Having a car phone also shows you have political clout since it's the only way to get one. For the less fortunate, car phone antennas can be installed so long as nobody discovers the fraud.

OUT

Switzerland: No more business-cum-holidays divided between Swiss banks and the ski slopes. The Bofors scandal and letter retrogatories have made Switzerland as unsafe as St Kitts.

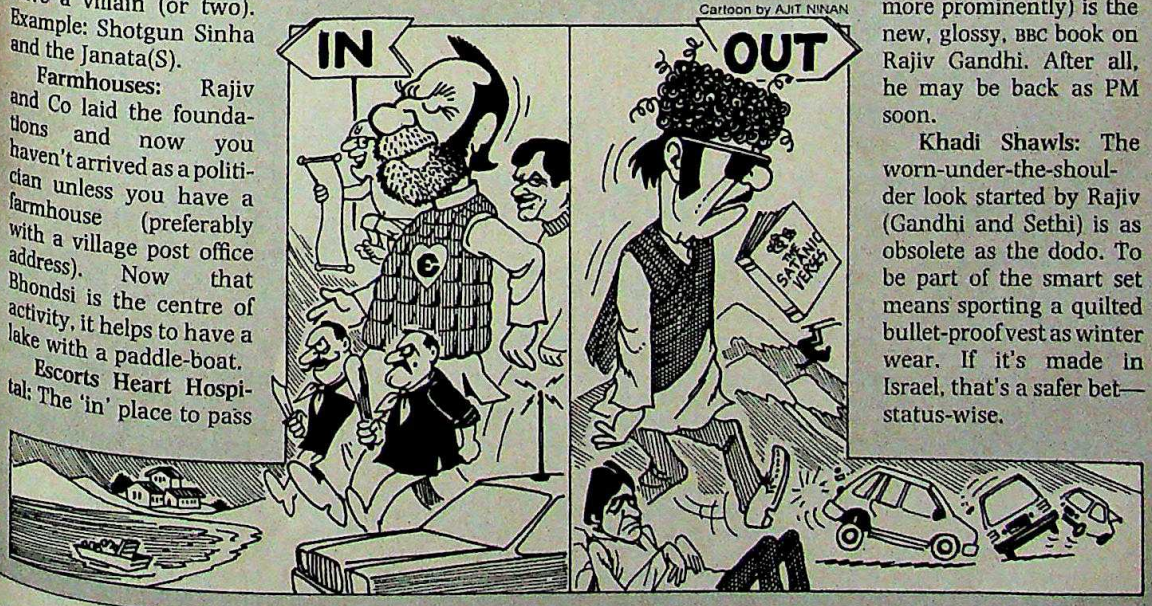
Fur Caps: Went out with V.P. Singh. Now that Maneka is back, has become even more of a social liability. Bare heads are safe unless the rumours that Rajiv has ordered a mink-lined Gandhi *topi* turns out to be true.

Marutis: The small car has become the small man's car. An absolute no-no unless it's the 1000 and even that depends on how high the premium is and whether you were able to pull enough strings to jump the queue.

Satanic Verses: The prominently-displayed (and unread) copy of Rushdie's book is now bad news. For the political puppie, the thing to display (even more prominently) is the new, glossy, BBC book on Rajiv Gandhi. After all, he may be back as PM soon.

Khadi Shawls: The worn-under-the-shoulder look started by Rajiv (Gandhi and Sethi) is as obsolete as the dodo. To be part of the smart set means sporting a quilted bullet-proof vest as winter wear. If it's made in Israel, that's a safer bet—status-wise.

Cartoon by AJIT NINAN



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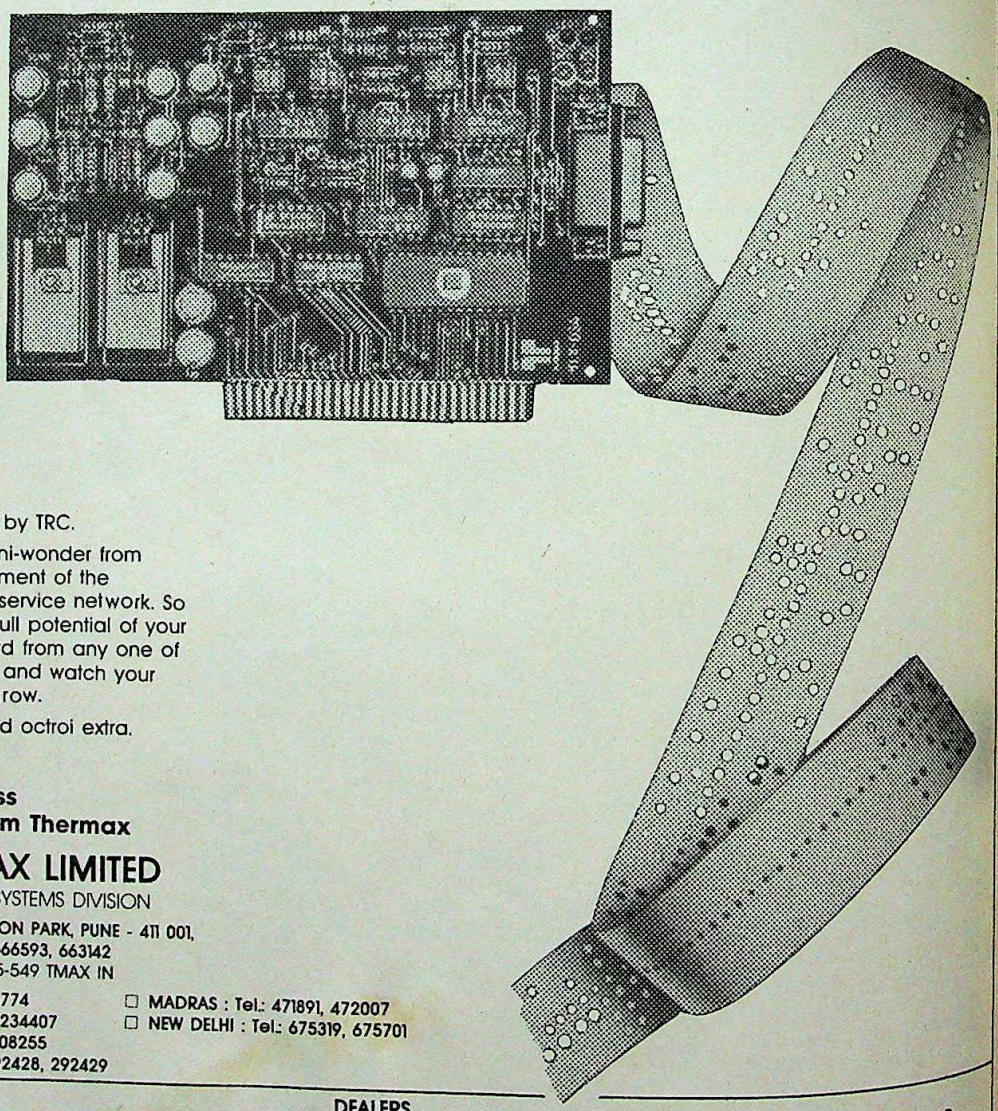
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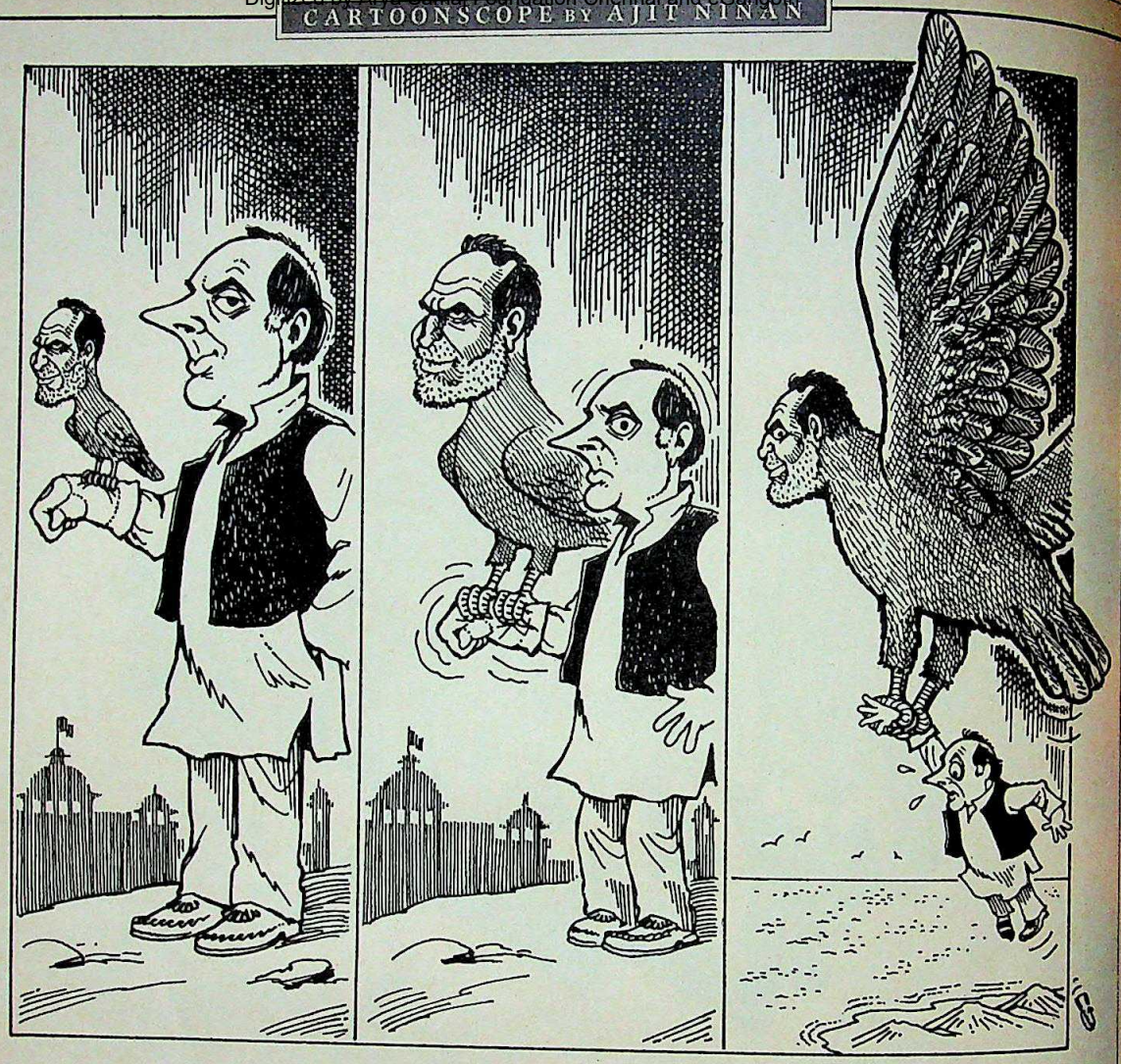
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SIGN POSTS

DIED: Vijayalakshmi Pandit, 90, renowned diplomat and freedom fighter, after a prolonged illness in Dehradun. She is survived by three daughters, including writer Nayantara Sahgal. Her body was brought to Delhi on a special flight, accompanied by nephew Rajiv Gandhi. The cremation was the occasion for a family reunion and was attended by cousins and political foes Rajiv Gandhi and Arun Nehru, apart from other mourners. Pandit was Jawaharlal Nehru's sister, and the first woman president of the UN General Assembly. In New York, General Assembly members observed a minute's silence in memoriam, and as a mark of respect, the UN flag flew at half-mast at its headquarters and at its Delhi office.



CONVERTED: Mick Jagger, lead singer of the popular rock group *The Rolling Stones*, and his long-time girlfriend Texan model, Jerry Hall, to Hinduism on the tourist island of Bali, in Indonesia a week before their wedding. The ceremony, which solemnised their tempestuous relationship, was consequently presided over by a Hindu priest.

UPHELD: By the Kerala High Court, the district collector's order banning the staging of the controversial play *Jesus Christ Superstar* by a school theatrical group in Kottayam. The musical is the creation of the super successful composer Andrew Lloyd Weber, famous for runaway Broadway hits such as *Cats*, *The Phantom of the Opera* and *Evita*. The order banned the play on grounds of blasphemy.

DENIED: Entry to Kishori Amonkar, high priestess of Hindustani classical music, at Siri Fort Auditorium in the capital. A participant in the ITC Sangeet Sammelan being held there, she was stopped at the gate by the President's security, who informed her that no one was allowed in after the VVIP's arrival. The artiste raged; and only much persuasion by ITC officials saved the day.



BORN: Pratham, the world's first test-tube buffalo last month at the National Dairy Research Institute (NDRI) in Karnal. The technology, devised and perfected by a team of NDRI scientists, puts Indian scientists ahead of their counterparts worldwide.

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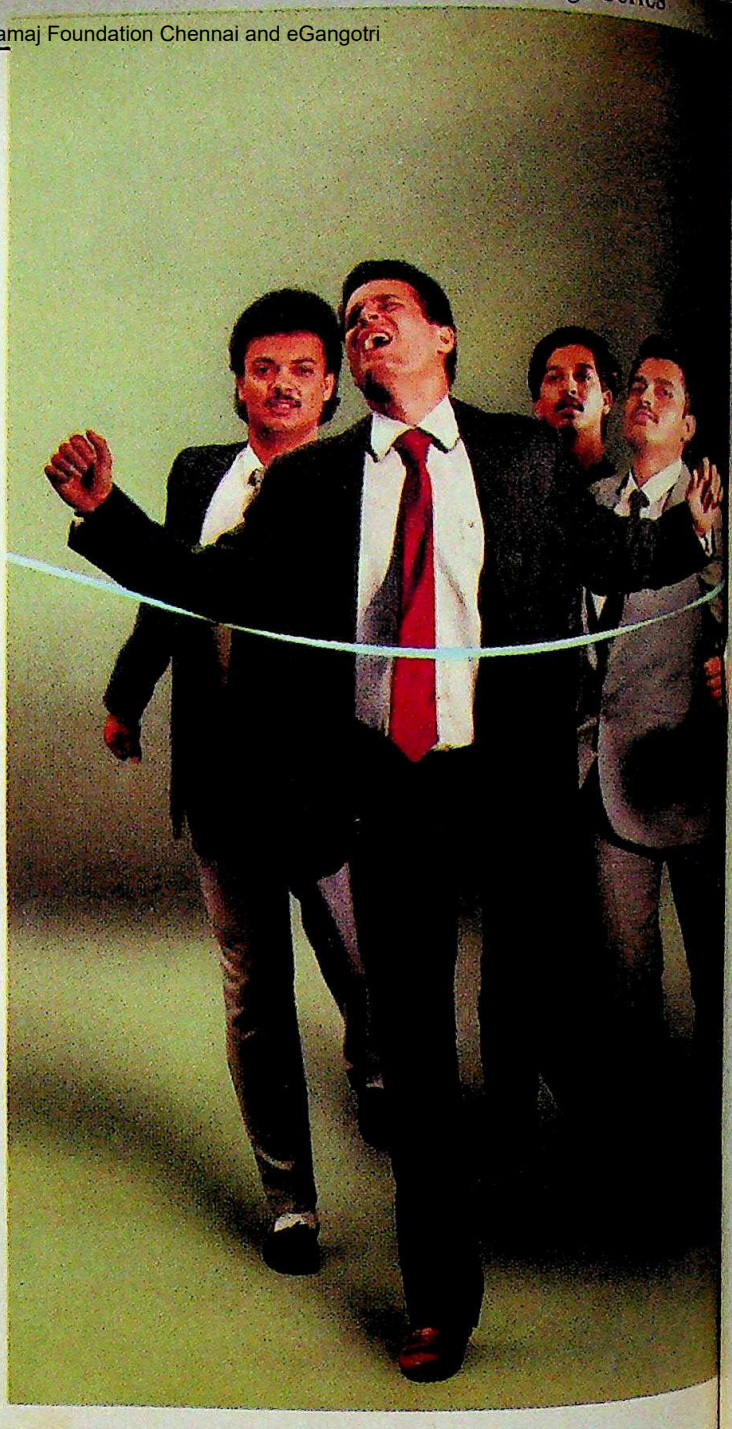
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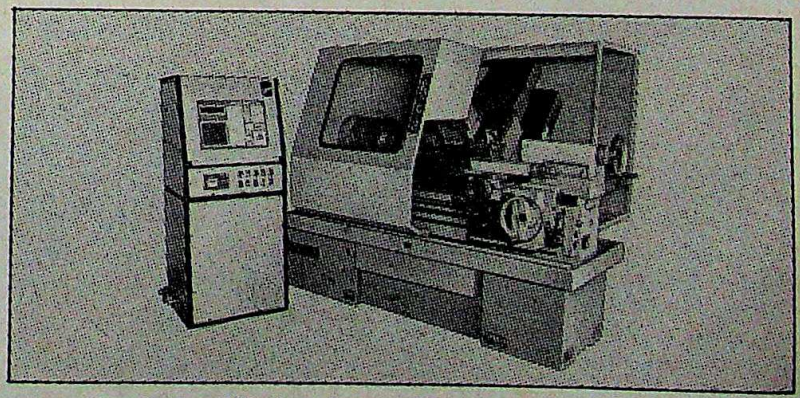
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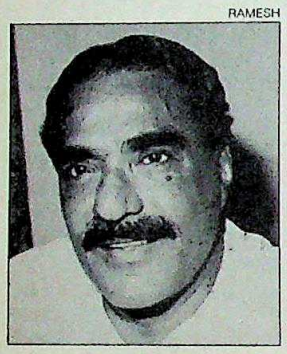
KERALA

Left Out

● CABINET formation at the Centre often requires the performance of a delicate balancing act. But despite the best efforts not everyone is satisfied. When Chandra Shekhar expanded his Council of Ministers, expectedly there was a sulker on the scene: K.M. Mani, leader of the church-backed Kerala Congress(M).

Mani's wrath is directed

RAMESH



Mani: dashed hopes

against former chief minister K. Karunakaran. Reason: Mani believes the wily Congress(I) bunged a spanner in his chances of securing a cabinet berth in the Chandra Shekhar Ministry. Though not a member of Parliament, Mani had thought he could get his party—with a member in each House—to support Chandra Shekhar and thereby wrangle a cabinet post.

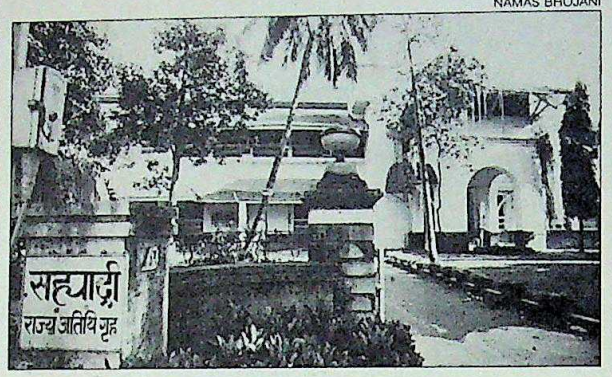
Having actively lobbied in Delhi, Mani was more than confident of making it. But then the ground below his feet suddenly gave way as Subramaniam Swamy informed him at the last minute that he was out of the reckoning—without saying why, of course.

Apparently, Karunakaran was in touch with the high command to ensure that Mani did not make it. Karunakaran's fear was that the Congress(I) would lose a Rajya Sabha seat if Mani made it to Parliament. For the moment, such fears have been firmly laid to rest.

MAHARASHTRA

Disappearing Act

NAMAS BHOJANI



Sahyadri bungalow: fading glory

● MORARJI Desai lived there as chief minister of the old Bombay state. So did Maharashtra's first chief minister Y.B. Chavan. But after Chavan's successor Kannamwar died in harness, the historic Sahyadri bungalow was converted into a state guest-house.

Now the state Government's Urban Development Department has decided to pull down the 15-room guest-house, which had been renovated at considerable cost. It will be replaced by a 60-room conference and state visitors' complex. The cost: more than Rs 10 crore.

Former Congress(I) MLA Chandrashekhar Prabhu says it is being pulled down because of Chief Minister Sharad Pawar's desire to hold a meeting of the National Development Council in Bombay which lacks a government conference centre. With Sahyadri will disappear one of Malabar Hill's last grand bungalows.

ANDHRA PRADESH

A Search in Vain

● NINE months after nine-year-old G. Vikas was abducted from a Hyderabad school, the Andhra Pradesh Police haven't been able to crack the puzzle. Last fortnight the boy's parents announced a Rs 2-lakh reward for any information about him. Earlier, his grandfather, Congress(I) MP G. Venkatswamy, appealed to former prime minister V.P. Singh and the country's best sleuths, the CBI, stepped in—only to draw a blank. "Posters announcing a reward is our final resort," says the father G. Vinod. But even that isn't doing much good.

Posters in Hyderabad: last resort

BABJI/JANTA STUDIO



BIHAR

Amended Status

● LAST fortnight, the Bihar Government cracked down not on the coal mafia from Dhanbad but what Chief Minister Laloo Prasad Yadav described as the state's "education mafia". What he was referring to was the Patna-based 17-year-old Lalit Narain Mishra Institute of Economic Development and Social Change.

The institute, which serves as a political base for Congress(I) leader Jagannath Mishra, was the target of attack as the former chief minister came out against the Yadav Government. The chief minister responded by having Mishra removed from the post of the "director-general". Though Yadav maintained the institute's autonomy, all employees were declared as "ad hoc". And he also ordered an inquiry into the "irregularities" committed there under the Mishra regime.

KARNATAKA

Dubious Details

● SLUGGING it out in battle in Karnataka this time are the state Cooperation Minister K.H. Patil and state Chief Secretary M. Sankaranarayanan. The genesis of the battle lies in an anonymous letter sent to Patil alleging that the chief secretary had withheld information from the House Rent and Accommodation Controller to privately let out his house in Bangalore. Patil then wrote a confidential letter to the chief secretary who hit back with a reply. A dissatisfied Patil then dashed off a letter to the governor alleging that Sankaranarayanan had supplied false information about the rent. Now the file on the unsavoury incident is with Chief Minister Bangarappa. But he has publicly stated that he has not seen the file. Meanwhile, the chief secretary's fate still hangs in the balance.

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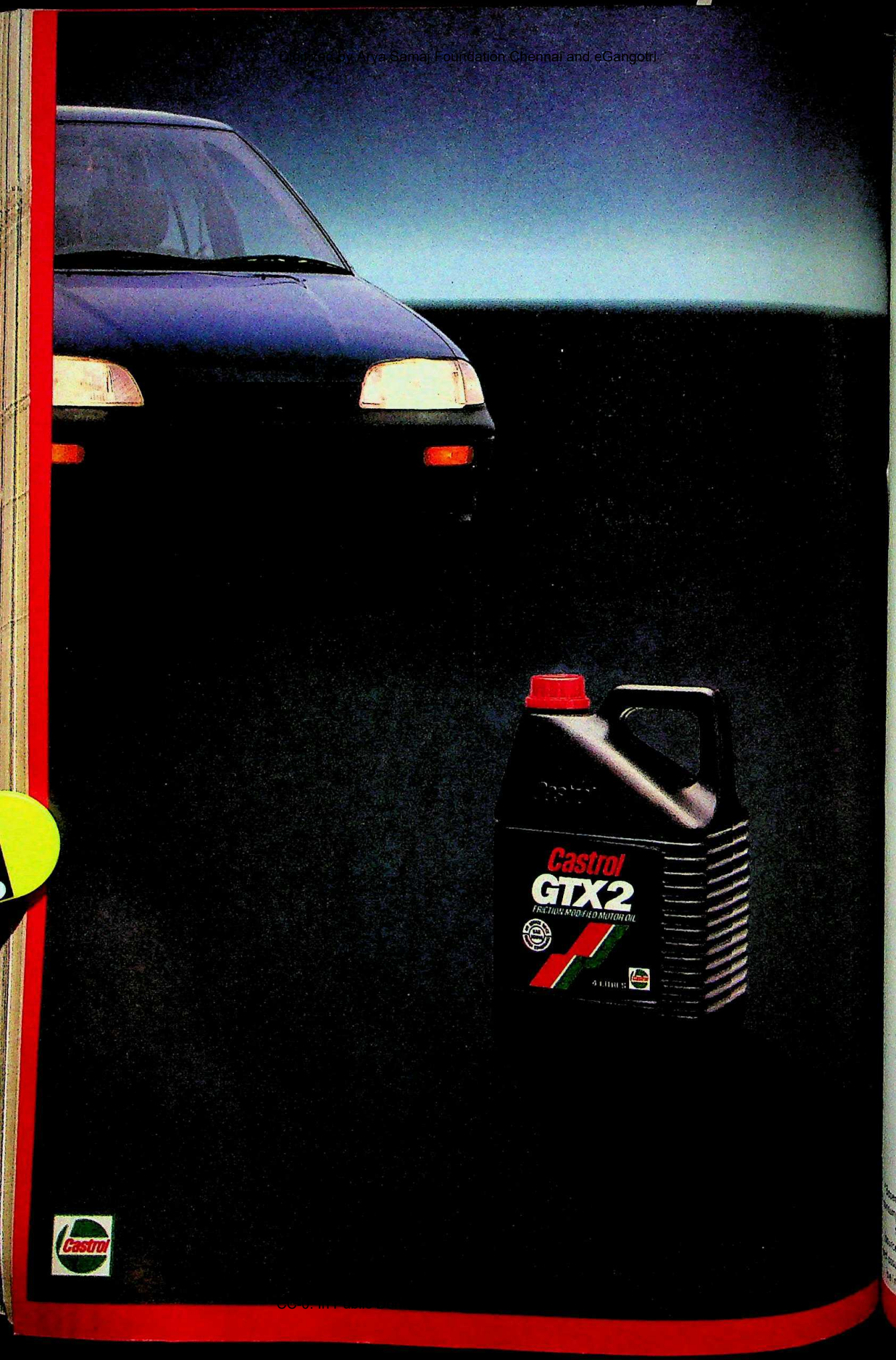
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Photographs by NAMAS BHOJANI



Garasiya women performing the Garba dance: synthesis of traditions

MAUL-E-SALAAM GARASIYAS

Symbols of Amity

A glorious example of cross-cultural fusion, the Rajput-Muslims are under duress

IN numbers, they are about two lakh. But in today's communally-charged atmosphere, they are an oasis of harmony. By any standards, the Maul-E-Salaam Garasiyas of Gujarat are a unique sect. A proud Muslim band steeped in Hindu traditions, they have taken the best of the two worlds to create a happy synthesis of their own.

The Garasiyas practise a congenial version of Islam and yet most of their customs are indelibly Hindu, down to their names, a fact that can confuse a layman. Says Daulatsinhji Rana, a top leader of the sect: "We represent the synthesis of Islam and Hinduism. We find that they match perfectly."

Concentrated mainly in the Bharuch, Kheda and Ahmedabad districts, the Garasiyas are, in fact, Rajputs who hesitantly embraced Islam in the reign of Mahmood Begada, the powerful sultan of Gujarat, in the 15th century. According to historians, the scions of some feudal Rajput families, overawed by the sultan's might, joined his army. They left their lands in the villages and shifted en masse to Ahmedabad. When they returned, their relatives, who had usurped their properties, condemned them as *mlecchas* (non-Hindus) who had eaten with the Muslims.

These Rajput chieftains went to Begada for help but he could do little apart from advising them to embrace Islam. The Rajputs did convert, but only with some reluctance, and resolved to retain their age-old Hindu customs. And thus was born the Maul-E-Salaam—a corruption of Mohar-E-Islam, meaning the stamp of Islam. The word Garasiya stems from the Gujarati word *garas* (a piece of land).

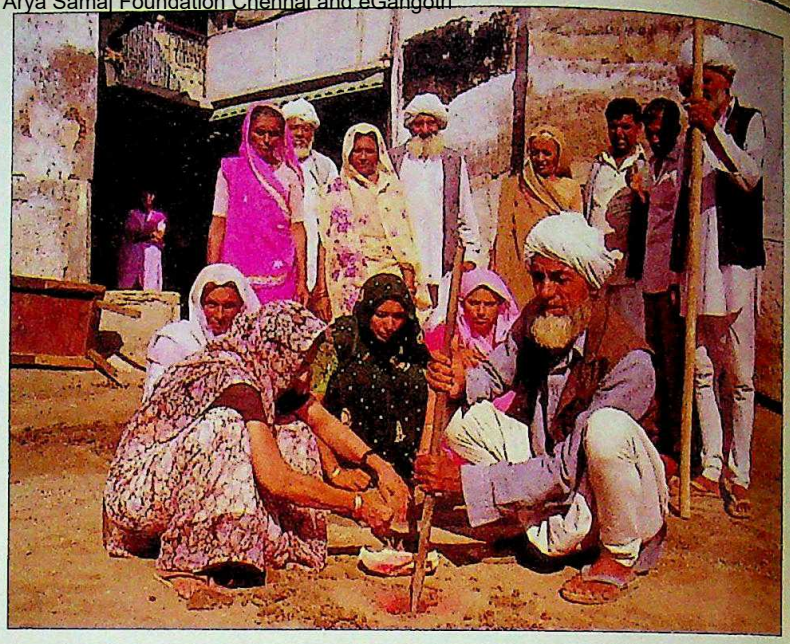
For about five centuries now, the Garasiyas have stuck steadfastly to their initial promise of grafting Islam onto their Hindu customs. Even today, the pesh imam of the main mosque at Amod, a key centre of the Garasiyas in the Bharuch district, sports a Hindu name: Mansinh Rana. More interesting is the fact that till the abolition of the Gujarat Taluqdari Act, the Garasiyas were governed by the Hindu law of inheritance. When it came to matrimony, however, the Shariat law was scrupulously followed. But the ceremony is muted, and the rituals smack more of jovial Hinduism than temperate Islam, with a difference: the actual marriage is performed by

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a *kazi* instead of a pundit.

Not always, though. Says Manhersinhji Rana, a member of the royal family of the erstwhile state of Kerwada, near Amod: "Even today, some Garasiya families call the Brahmin priest to officiate in the ceremony."



CULTURALLY, there is little to differentiate the Garasiyas from Hindus: the garba dance is performed gustily by women on marriage eve. Songs are sung in praise of Krishna and some Hindu goddesses, but without the icons.

The rulers of Amod and Kerwada—both hailing from the Rana family of Chudasama Rajputs in Junagadh—were considered the supreme leaders of the Garasiyas till Independence. The two areas were the only full-fledged princely states of the Garasiyas and they firmly sought to keep the Maul-E-Salaam traditions alive.

Not surprisingly, then, the royal families of Amod and Kerwada have produced some truly illustrious figures: Mansinhbha Rana of Kerwada rose to become the speaker of the state Assembly. And Fatehsinh Rana, a member of the Amod family, retired as the chief secretary of Gujarat.

Unfortunately, thanks to the communal virus sweeping Gujarat, the Garasiya youngsters are fast becoming rigidly religious. With more and more *madarasas* (Islamic schools) coming up in Garasiya-dominated villages, the youngsters are becoming increasingly militant and blinkered. Says Mehmood Desai, a business executive, who has studied the phenomenon of the increasing Islamisation of the Garasiyas: "Insecurity is fast gripping them. Suddenly, they realise that the Hindu fundamentalists see them as Muslims and the Muslims do not consider them as one of their own."

Most of the older members of the sect, however, are too proud of their

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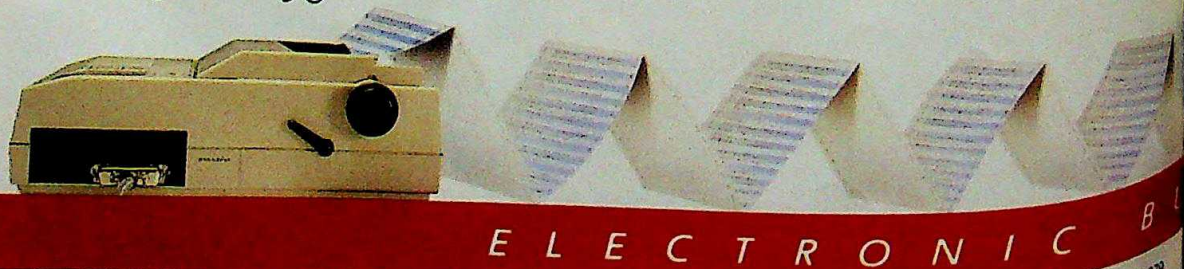
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...DABAD Te... ...BANESWAR... ...ORA. HYDERA...

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The haldipeethi ceremony; and (facing page) the mandva-ropan ceremony: Hindu rituals

Rajput past to allow any dilution. Says Ranvirsinh Rana of Amod: "When I named my first son Shahid, my father extracted a promise from me that I would select a Hindu name for my second child. When my second son was born, I had to name him Digvijaysinh." The new generation, in defiance of centuries-old veneration, is casting aside Hindu names, favouring instead Muslim ones. Almost all the boys that INDIA TODAY talked to in Kheda and Bharuch sported Muslim names. Madhavsinh Rathod's son, for instance, is Gulabsinh but his grandson's name is Hamid Khan, unmistakably Muslim.

The VHP has tried its best to get the Garasiyas into the Hindu fold but the attempt seems to have boomeranged: the "pure" Rajputs just do not wish to concretise matrimonial alliances with them, however accommodating they might be on the surface. Natwarsinh Solanki, an Arya Samaji and a Congress(I) leader, faced a problem after he had succeeded in convincing 700 Garasiyas to re-enter the Hindu fold. Many of these prodigals discovered that they were still pariahs to the Hindus. "The experiment didn't succeed," laments one of Solanki's aides. What the experiment did raise was the spectre of fundamentalism, with Muslim preachers jumping into the fray, ensuring that the Garasiyas moved towards resurgent Islamisation, getting rid of traditional Hindu customs. As Kiransinh Rana, a member of the Amod royal family, puts it: "A few decades from now, the Maul-E-Salaam Garasiyas will pass into history." And another fortress of communal harmony would have crumbled.

—UDAY MAHURKAR in Bharuch, Kheda and Dhandhuka

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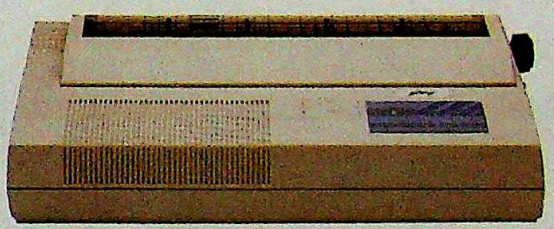
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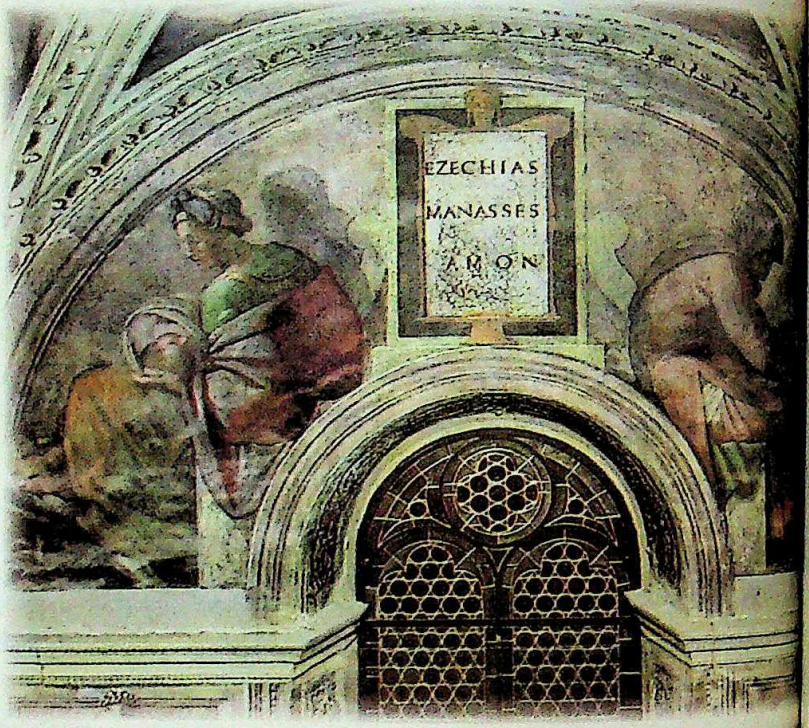
"And Darkness Was Upon The Face Of The Deep... And God Said, Let There Be Light."

He didn't want to paint. He always signed his letters : "Michelangelo, sculptor". But Pope Julius II, (at times with a cane in hand) would tolerate no excuses.

Michelangelo began the task of painting the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel in 1508.

Unveiled in 1512, "all Rome admired it and crowded to see it", as a chronicler described the event. It was, is, indeed one of the greatest masterpieces of world civilization.

Yet, four-and-a-half centuries of time was destined to take its toll. Varnishes made of animal glue, leaking roofs, sooty grease from burning candle tallow collectively obscured the bril-





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liance of the masterpiece. The final injustice of it all was pollution – the dirt and grime of Rome that gradually threatened to inflict its dreaded hand on this 132 x 44 square foot canvas.

THE RESTORATION.

Whilst Man himself, directly and indirectly, is responsible for the devil that is pollution, it is natural that he himself be the exorcist.

For nine years, restorers have been removing the grime of centuries from the masterpiece. (Which, ironically took a quicker four years to complete).

Nine years of patient and hard manual work – with the help of computers and ultra-modern photographic techniques.

The results were breathtaking. The gloom and darkness were swept aside like a curtain to reveal the majesty and brilliance of Michelangelo.

Faith and hope had been restored.

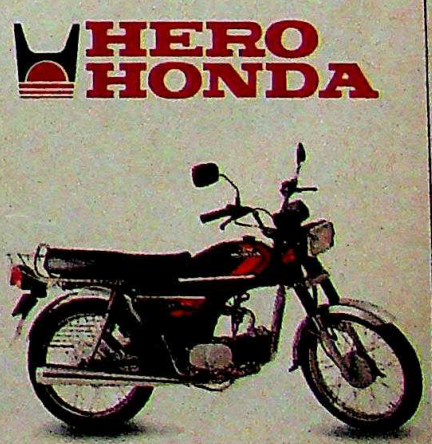
THE SMOKELESS WONDER.

Hero Honda salutes the dedication and effort of the team of restorers and the Vatican; and the Nippon Television Network Corporation for funding this project.

In its own small way Hero Honda is in the forefront of anti-pollution measures, on the road. Its range of 4-stroke motorcycles – besides being phenomenally fuel-efficient and dependable – are also smokeless wonders.

For its 400,000 owners (plus 10,000 every month), the Hero Honda is a befitting example of India's anti-pollution campaign, which seeks to dispel the darkness of pollution.

In bringing the 'Restoration of Michelangelo' to our readers' attention, Hero Honda has a simple message : Let there be light.



HTA 6883

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AYODHYA

EXPLOITING THE ISSUE

By PRABHU CHAWLA

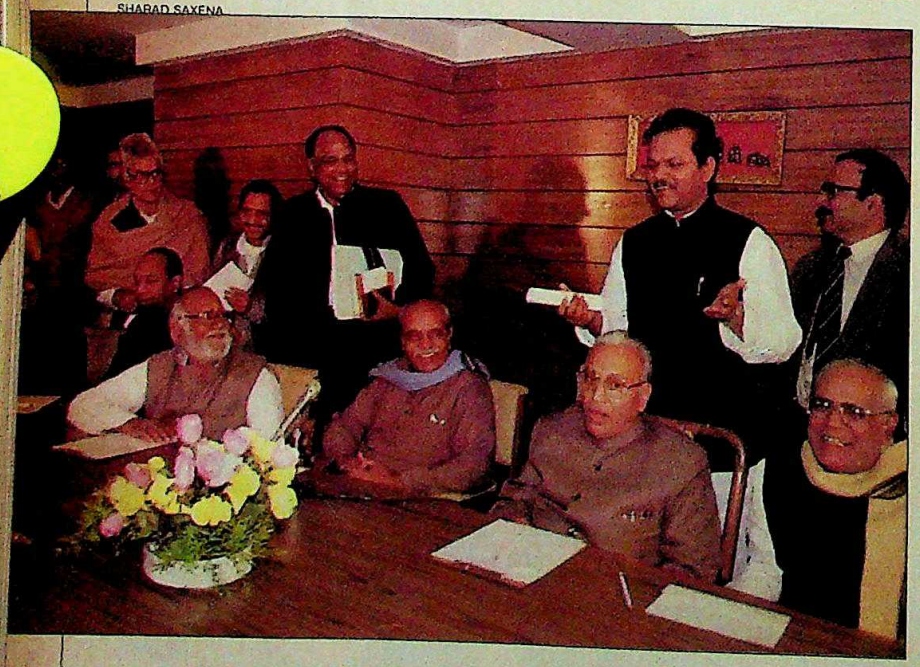
POLITICS is not only the art of the impossible, but also of the unconscionable. The stirrings of conscience cease where the vote banks begin; rationality sinks like a stone once the totting up of electoral arithmetic starts. Last fortnight even as sprees of stabbing hit towns across the Hindi belt, even as the armies of communal discord gathered their armaments and rhetoric, even as conflagration threatened to blaze, the moral nullity of the Indian political landscape was manifest.

The only good news was the avoidance of another bloody conflict at Ayodhya on December 6. It appeared the sting had been taken out of the Babri Masjid-Ram Janmabhoomi controversy and that, finally, all the antagonists had decided to lower the heat in a brand-new spirit of compromise. But actually, all they had done, for the moment, was to sheathe their claws.

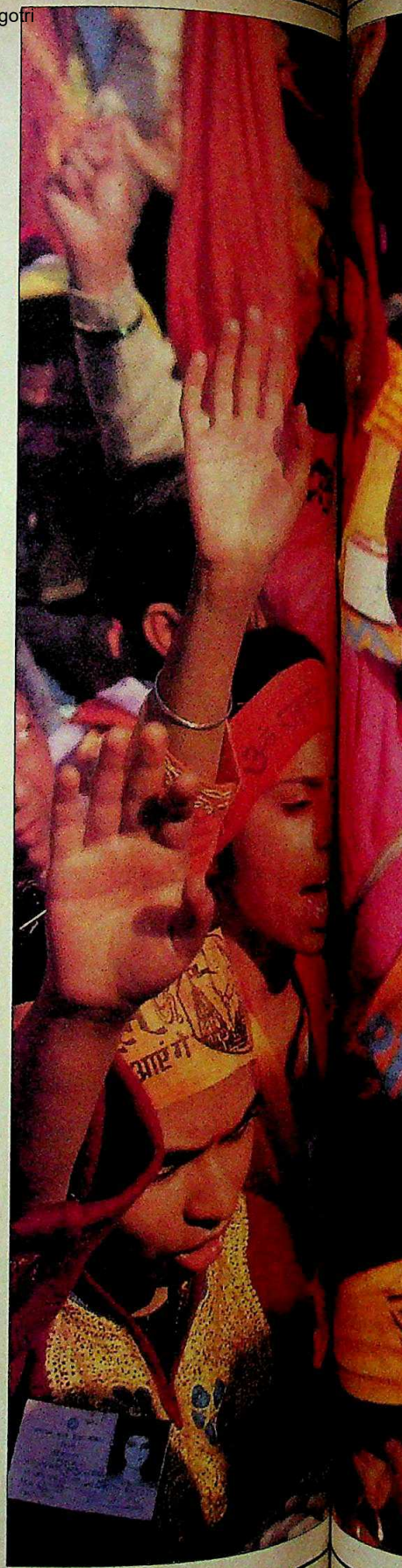
The reality is that the positions that fuel the crisis remain the same. Notwithstanding several rounds of direct talks the VHP-BJP combine remains determined to build the Ram mandir at the disputed *Janmasthan* and the Babri Masjid Action Committee remains adamantly opposed to shifting the masjid. The prevention of another violent confrontation—that appeared to signal a softening of stands—was the upshot of

The apparent softening of stands was actually the upshot of political compulsions and not reconciliation.

SHARAD SAXENA



VHP, BMAC leaders with Shekhawat, Yadav, Pawar and Sahay



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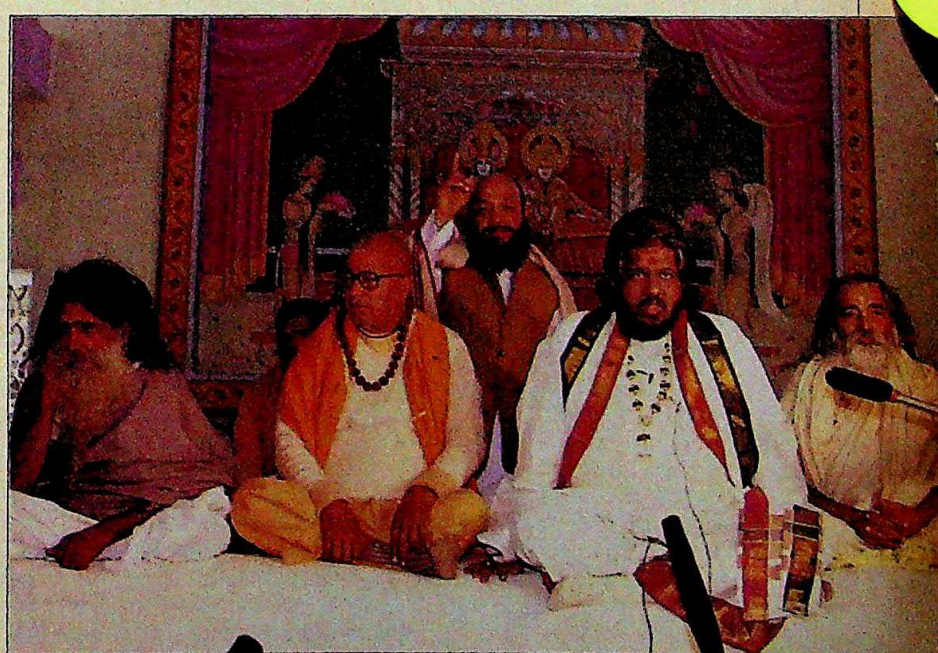
political compulsions not reconciliation. There were several reasons. The fire-breathing Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh, Mulayam Singh Yadav, who had vowed to vanquish all the Hindutva brigades, mellowed down under the weight of survival. For the Congress(I), his chief support-system, worried about its own eroding political base and the tremendous Hindu backlash Yadav had evoked, asked him to desist from taking a tough stand. The police was told to show restraint, kar sewaks were allowed darshan and a face-saving satyagraha, and a confrontation was averted.

YADAV'S somersault was of course the most remarkable. After adamantly refusing to even talk to any Hindu leader, he presented a pathetic picture as he welcomed the VHP leaders with folded hands. He declared he would even involve the state machinery to construct a 'Bhavya Mandir' at Ayodhya, a total turnabout from his earlier assertions that the Ram temple could be constructed only at Chitrakoot.

Another reason that a showdown was averted was because the BJP-VHP-combine too actively worked to keep the temperature below boiling point. Their reasons were clearly survivalist and not altruistic. The leaders of the Hindutva juggernaut knew they could not antagonise their followers any further by enacting another bloody clash, and then refusing to push the issue to its conclusion, as had happened on October 30. And with elections nowhere in the offing, there was no way they could push for a dramatic denouement. Clearly, the issue had to be kept alive, but at a lower key.

The controversy helps parties to chalk out strategies to consolidate and expand vote banks. This was evident even as the new prime minister convened his first all-party meeting to deliberate on the Ram Janmabhoomi-Babri Masjid imbroglio—perhaps the most divisive issue ever to confront the country. The BJP President L.K. Advani, rider of the chariots of aggression, without whose acquiescence few solutions are possible, was not invited. The Congress(I) President Rajiv Gandhi—leader of the largest party in Parliament, pillar of the present Government—did not come, ostensibly because of his aunt Vijayalakshmi Pandit's death. That left

Chandraswamy who was given the task of splitting the VHP surprisingly took the stand that the temple should be constructed.



Women kar sewaks (left); and Chandraswamy with mahants in Ayodhya

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Chandra Shekhar, a man with no many date, to thrash out the critical issue with men of lesser consequence. For example, the representative of the Congress(I), a party studded with veterans, was Santosh Kardodia, an unknown MP. To those who read politics between the lines, the signals were clear: the issue was not up for resolution yet.

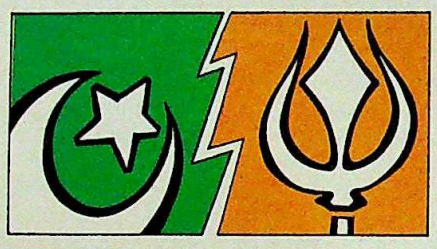
Doublespeak and double-dealing have rent the air as parties change postures and refuse to leave Muslim and Hindu leaders alone to sort out the tangle. While the Congress(I) leaders at the Centre shouted themselves hoarse that kar sewa could not be permitted at the *shilanyas* site, its leaders in Uttar Pradesh were hobnobbing with the Hindu leaders and demanding the kar sewa to be allowed at the very same site. Both Narain Dutt Tiwari and Vasant Sathe came out in open support of the construction. And Rajiv Gandhi wrote a letter to the prime minister urging him to refer the dispute to the five-member Supreme Court bench.

He was not alone in practising the politics of opportunism and expediency. Even as the Congress(I) declared itself opposed to both 'Muslim and Hindu fundamentalists', its most powerful Chief Minister, Sharad Pawar of Maharashtra, was confabulating with both parties. Pawar flew down to the RSS headquarters at Nagpur to seek its support for a 'peaceful solution'.

Similarly, the BJP declared itself vehemently against any dialogue with Yadav or the Centre, while its high-profile Chief Minister, Bhairon Singh Shekhawat of Rajasthan, was discussing the tangle not only with Yadav and Chandra Shekhar but also with Muslim and Hindu leaders.

Nor did the prime minister and his colleagues distinguish themselves with gainful loss resolve. Unashamed by gaining political mileage, the ruling clique at the Centre made an attempt to divide the VHP and prop up its own band of Hindu and Muslim leaders.

While the three chief ministers held talks with recognised leaders of both communities, the prime minister and the deputy prime minister convened a meeting of unknown religious leaders at the prime minister's Bhondsi farmhouse. The thrust of the speeches there, was that the VHP was not the sole custodian of Hindu interests and the leaders should take up the initiative for constructing the temple. Consequent to this conclave, the controversial Chandraswamy, who is charged with forgeries and FERA violations, was assigned the task of splitting the VHP. He was given all the government facilities, including security, to visit Ayodhya for an on-the-spot study. Surprisingly, he took the BJP-VHP stand that the temple should be constructed on the *garbhagraha* site.



Doublespeak has rent the air as parties change postures and refuse to leave Muslim and Hindu leaders to sort out the tangle.

THE Muslim leaders, under pressure from the Centre to fall in line for the time being, took contradictory stands. In their meetings with Hindu leaders, the prime minister and chief ministers and the leaders of the Babri Masjid movement promised to consider the possibility of shifting the mosque if it was desired by a court judgement based on historical facts. They also promised to consider the suggestion of referring the dispute to the Supreme Court. But when some of them attended the crucial meeting of the all-powerful Muslim Personal Law Board—which had also taken up cudgels in the Shah Bano case—they strongly condemned the move to shift or demolish the mosque. They asserted the Shariat forbade any such thing, and passed an unanimous resolution that the shrine would not be shifted because it was built on vacant land. The double-talk of the Muslim leadership arises from the contradictions of its own ambitions: it is basking in the importance that has come its way as different parties come wooing and it knows once the crisis is sorted out its relevance will dwindle.

Janus-faced too has been the behaviour of the RSS-VHP combine. While their team led by RSS leader Moropant Pingle and Vishnu Hari Dalmia participated in the talks, fire-brand leader Ashok Singhal was declaring the kar sewa would start not from the *shilanyas* site but from even closer to the shrine, and they would neither abide by any court judgement nor talk to Yadav. But other RSS leaders were conferring with the prime minister and were willing to consider submitting documentary evidence to prove their point. The primary need for conserving their vote banks reflected itself in the double-talk: in public they were opposing any court settlement, but in private they had given an undertaking to the prime minister that they would make only some symbolic protests if the dispute was referred to the Supreme Court. But the most surprising shift in the VHP-RSS line was their sudden willingness to talk to the Muslim leaders directly—a suggestion they had summarily rejected during V.P. Singh's regime.

Attempting to sit pretty in this whole quagmire, after having contributed to its creation by what amounted to the most brazen, if somewhat confused, display of communal vote politics when he was in power, was the Janata Dal of V.P. Singh. Having wrested the now all too familiar "moral high ground" from the resultant polarisation, for himself, the former prime minister was attempting to display a consistency in policy. At the all-party meeting, Singh and Madhu Dandavate made it clear that they would support any move which ensured construction of the temple without harming the existing structure. Also, they would abide by the court order.

But any such harmonious denouement seems like a mirage at the moment. For with elections not yet in sight, every political party will continue to machinate to keep the issue alive so that votes may be harnessed, no matter what the consequences. So far, in the last two years, these have amounted to over 500 deaths and Rs 200 crore worth of property destroyed. In the future they may amount to a nation irrevocably riven. But perhaps in the cold calculations of the politician, this too is a small price to pay for the pursuit of power.

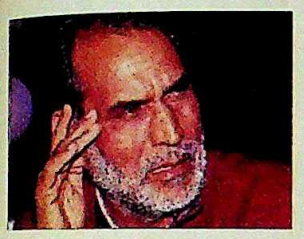
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Games Parties Play

Politicians of all hues are bent upon exploiting the complex issue in order to extract electoral advantages.

JANATA DAL(S)



Creating Divisions

- **Try to split the organisations spearheading the movement.**
- **Keep alive the threat of communal violence in order to prevent the Congress(I) from insisting on elections.**
- **Chandra Shekhar will woo the Hindus while Mulayam Singh Yadav tries to split the Muslims.**

PRIME Minister Chandra Shekhar took a major step, in at least putting up a facade of hope, by persuading the two eternally battling factions—the VHP and the Babri Masjid Action Committee (BMAC) to talk.

His powers of persuasion at getting them to sit together now seem an attempt to buy time during which he could create a rift between the VHP and the sadhus of the temple town. He used Rajasthan Chief Minister Bhairon Singh Shekhawat—who is dependent on Janata Dal(S) support for survival—to get the reluctant VHP leaders to talk.

An indication of Chandra Shekhar's strategy was the appearance of Chandraswamy in Ayodhya. Though the Janata Dal(S) spokesman S.P. Malviya denies that the controversial godman had gone to Ayodhya at the prime minister's behest, Chandraswamy has admitted that it was he who got the sadhus to meet Chandra Shekhar at his farmhouse on November 30.

It is obvious to everyone, most of all the prime minister himself, that on January 10, the date set for the next meeting of the VHP and BMAC, they might not be any closer to a solution. After the first meeting, the leaders sang familiar tunes. Said Javed Habib, member BMAC: "Nobody can snatch the mosque from us. The site belongs to the mosque and we will provide documents to prove it." And Ashok Singhal, president of the VHP: "We are interested only in one settlement and that is to restore the temple to the Hindus."

It could have been statements made a year ago. And as if to expose the meaninglessness of this exercise, Syed Shahabuddin who heads the splinter group, the Babri Masjid Movement Coordination Committee (BMMCC), shot off a letter to Subodh Kant Sahay, Union minister of state for home, reminding him that the title suit was already before the court. "Even if the two parties come to some kind of an agreement, the Government has no legal status to sidestep the court's judgement," he says.

The Janata Dal (S) gameplan is to use the VHP leaders themselves to convince the BMAC leaders that the site is the birthplace of Lord Rama. But according to a senior Muslim leader who does not want to be quoted, the Muslim fear is that if there is any indication of them making some sort of a compromise, the VHP will go for the jugular and immediately bring in the issue of 3,000 other mosques—especially in Varanasi and Mathura—which they claim were built on the ruins of temples.

The VHP's claims are not the only issues that the 60-MP-strong party which runs the Government will have to contend with. Already there are differences between Chandra Shekhar and the Congress(I), for Rajiv Gandhi whose government permitted the *shilanyas* on November 9, 1989 says that the site is not disputed, contradicting the Government's stand.

All that the talks have achieved is to set off archaeologists and historians to trading theories and charges. Chandra Shekhar does not expect much to come of this raucous debate. His real gameplan involves the use of Mulayam Singh Yadav. The Uttar Pradesh chief minister is expected to convey to the Muslims that even the utmost he did to stymie the Hindu hordes proved insufficient, and therefore it is imperative that the Muslims come to the negotiating table, and do so with an open mind. This strategy also helps Chandra Shekhar to keep the Congress(I) off-balance.

—HARINDER BAWEJA

CONGRESS(I)



Playing all Sides

- **Will try to revert to Hindu card by allowing local leaders to speak in favour of a temple being built.**
- **Talk about court intervention at the central level to please Muslims.**
- **Will try to steal the BJP thunder by asking for any group other than the VHP or BJP to be allowed to build the temple.**

AFTER being badly mauled at the hustings due to its decision to allow the *shilanyas*—by Rajiv Gandhi's own admission—the party feels that it should tread much more carefully this time. But even though the survival of the Government depends solely on its support, the Congress(I) has not been able to make a concerted move in alliance with Chandra Shekhar to try for a solution to the vexed issue. Instead even as the Government managed to make the two communities sit across the table, Rajiv Gandhi came out with a formula suggesting the appointment of a committee of judges

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to find out whether in fact a temple existed at the Babri Masjid site or not. This more than anything else signified the party's confusion. And this lack of clarity in this majormost issue continues to bedevil it.

When Rajiv Gandhi launched broadsides against the BJP at the last AICC(I) session it was construed as an attempt to woo the Muslims who have been alienated from the party. During the course of his Sadbhavana Yatra also he visited places where there had been communal carnages. And significantly the party maintained a studied silence on Mulayam Singh Yadav.

BUT once V.P. Singh gave up the chair for the mosque's sake, the Congress(I) had second thoughts. While it was tactically necessary to support Yadav to break the Janata Dal—even though 78 of its 94 MLAs were opposed to it—the party also made it a point to exert pressure on him once he came to them for support. "Unless we exert some pressure on Yadav there is a risk of losing our popular base. In his state he is being viewed as a *Ravana*," said a senior Congress(I) leader.

The support given by the party to Yadav's stand on Ayodhya—even though they softly backtracked later—might not exactly help wean away the Muslims nor will it make the Hindus happy.

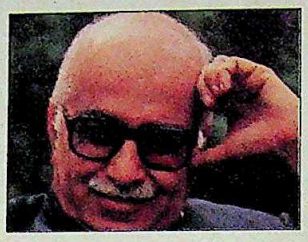
That exactly is the dilemma the party faces now and is reflected in the Rajiv Gandhi formula. The formula sought to incorporate different viewpoints. Party representatives met various religious leaders including Imam Abdullah Bukhari and one of the shankaracharyas. The former Punjab governor S.S. Ray was asked to look into the technicalities of the proposal. And going by the Muslim reaction the formula has not at least evoked any negative response. Says Mohammed Afzal, Janata Dal MP and close aide of the Imam: "The panel of judges is a very good suggestion provided its decision is binding upon both parties in the dispute. It should not be another toothless commission."

Since the BJP-VHP combine is not in a mood to even leave the matter for the courts to decide, how they will react to this formula is predictable. "If our formula is accepted tempers will cool down and if normalcy is restored we will regain our position among the Hindus," says V.N. Gadgil.

It is on such hopes that the Congress(I) strategy will be built.

—BHASKAR ROY

BJP



Stretching it Out

- **Cool down passions temporarily, negotiate with Muslim leadership but prepare for a longer haul.**
- **Generate sympathy for the cause of the mandir by propagating martyrdom of kar sewaks.**
- **Launch a campaign for dismissal of Mulayam Singh Yadav, to make inroads into Uttar Pradesh.**

FLUSH with the success of its carefully crafted strategies, the BJP is preparing for the coming election with an "ideology consolidation" programme which will culminate in a resistance movement in April.

A subtle shift is discernible in the BJP's stand from the fundamentalist rhetoric it successfully used in the build-up to October 30. According to the current strategy it will consolidate and expand its Hindu vote-bank by lowering passions aroused by the Rath Yatra without abandoning its Hindutva platform. Direct confrontation with the state will be limited while its ideological propaganda will continue through countrywide meetings and distributions of video cassettes on last month's "massacre " of kar sewaks. "The mood may subside but Ayodhya will influence the electorate," said L.K. Advani.

The party is aware that it cannot prolong the agitation just to harvest votes, as it will be under tremendous pressure from its rank and file to do something immediately at the disputed site. Much money has been collected for the temple and the donors are wanting to know what has happened to it. Also, the cadre will point to the kar sewaks, sadhus and mahants who were killed and insist that their "sacrifice" should not go in vain and they will not accept any moderation.

The party is trying to wash off some of the dirt that has stuck on the saffron flag and nudging the VHP towards the negotiating table is part of this effort.

There is a visible surge of confidence within the party. "We can fight the elections without any alliance. Our vote-bank is bound to increase," says Advani. In Uttar Pradesh the party has already started the process of finalising its list of candidates for each of the 85 Lok Sabha and 425 Vidhan Sabha seats in the state. The state unit feels that it could improve its strength from 57 seats to more than 225 if they stick on to the hardline. Says a senior party leader: "Softening of the stance now would leave us nowhere. We have raised people's expectations and there could be no backtracking."

It may often appear that the VHP is conducting the Hindutva orchestra. But there is nothing to indicate that the BJP is unduly perturbed at the growing role of the VHP and there should not be an Ashok Singhal-L.K. Advani standoff for the Hindutva cake. As things stand, however, it suits the BJP to appear as the moderating influence. But there is some friction between the RSS elements and the political moderates. Whenever there is a major difference "my view will prevail" says Advani.

—SHAHNAZ ANKLESARIA AIYAR

JANATA DAL



Exploiting the Fallout

- **V.P. Singh will reinforce the point that the protection of the Babri Masjid will be his goal.**
- **Will try to regain lost ground in Uttar Pradesh by targeting Mulayam Singh Yadav for his opportunistic brand of politics.**
- **Will pressure the Government to refer the dispute to the courts.**

THE Janata Dal has nothing more to lose. For it has lost everything. And from rockbottom—losing half the party and the Government—there can only be one way: up. V.P. Singh's "sacrifice" has invested him with a martyr's role at least in the eyes of the Muslims.

Till the split in the Janata Dal

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Is There a Way Out?

IT is becoming apparent with every passing day that courts, governments, archaeologists, historians and politicians in particular—are irrelevant to the solution of the Ram Janmabhoomi-Babri Masjid dispute. Faith and belief exist in a universe different from that of reason and logic. The Dead Sea parted for Moses. Jesus was born of an immaculate conception. Ram was born at the *janmasthan* in Ayodhya.

Like Jerusalem, Ayodhya has become the epicentre of all-consuming passions rooted not just in metaphysical beliefs but also in the martyrdom of both Muslims and Hindus. The communal conflict over "liberating" the site goes back to the mid-1850s which was later politically exploited by the British as a "law-and-order" issue to justify the annexation of Awadh. According to the historian Sushil Srivastava of Allahabad University, Hindu mahants of Ayodhya first wrested control of the *janmasthan* from the Muslims in 1853 after a bloody clash. Later, a group of maulvis, led by Amir Ali, counterattacked but were butchered by the forces of Nawab Wajid Ali Shah, who wanted to avoid a further Hindu-Muslim conflict. Ali was slain and called a martyr.

In 1855, local Muslims recaptured the Babri Masjid after a fierce battle in which many mahants were slaughtered. This followed a renewed assault by the Hindus killing Muslim defenders. As the battles continued, community leaders, disturbed by the fall-out on Hindu-Muslim relations, worked out the first compromise under which joint worship was organised at the site—Muslims prayed inside the mosque facing which the Hindus built a platform for worship. Subsequently modified, such arrangements lasted only till they were subverted whenever convenient for political gain by religious factions and the British. In time the disputed site became entrenched in Hindu and Muslim minds as mythology.

The recent developments like the shifting of the idols into the *garbhagraha*, the unlocking of the Masjid gates in 1986, the *shilanyas* and the kar sewa are variations on the same historical weave. However, the past does demonstrate that when there is a genuine awakening among community elders to the need for sectarian peace and marginalising politicians and fanatics, they can arrive at solutions and usher in sobriety. Here are some possibilities under discussion:

SOLUTION	PROBLEM AND PROSPECTS
I: Demolish the structure and allow construction of the Ram temple based on the VHP's architectural plan.	Will be unacceptable to Muslims and non-BJP parties. Communal tensions will explode. **IMPOSSIBLE**
II: Hand over the mosque to the Uttar Pradesh Government and maintain it as a historical monument.	The VHP and other Hindu organisations will not accept it. Even Muslims will oppose it. **IMPOSSIBLE**
III: Acquire the entire land around the shrine and hand it over to the VHP for the construction of a new temple while keeping the existing structure intact.	Will be rejected by the VHP and the RSS who may launch a violent agitation against it. They oppose shifting of the idols from the sanctum sanctorum. **POSSIBLE**
IV: Permit the construction of the temple from the *shilanyas* site but hold final plans in abeyance until the Supreme Court decides on the religious nature of the structure.	Hardcore Muslims and VHP leaders will oppose this move. While the Muslims will insist that the issue be decided by the high court before starting construction, the VHP will oppose any court intervention. **LIKELY**
V: Split the existing structure into two parts. While the *garbhagraha* may be handed over to the VHP for the construction of the temple, the other two tombs could be retained for the reconstruction of the mosque. There would be separate entries for the worship areas.	The BJP will have to persuade the VHP to accept this proposal. If they fail to do so, the Muslims will refuse to compromise. **FEASIBLE**
VI: Muslims hand over the structure to the VHP along with the land around it for temple construction after a guaranteed condition that Hindus would not demand demolition of any other mosque from a cut-off date to be mutually agreed upon.	It will be opposed by the Muslim organisations resisting the Babri Masjid demolition, but not necessarily by rank and file Muslims. The main objection will be the surrender of waqf property. **POSSIBLE**
VII: As suggested by the BJP, Hindus finance the relocation of the mosque brick by brick at a nearby site.	Muslims will not agree to it, but if the *ulemas* declare the present site desecrated because of the presence of idols, moderates may agree. **UNLIKELY**

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Mulayam Singh Yadav was as much revered by the Muslims as Singh himself. However, when the chief minister held a prolonged meeting with Abdullah Bukhari, shahi imam of Delhi's Jama Masjid last fortnight, he discovered the old equations had turned topsy-turvy. *"Jisko unhone kal tak katil kaha aaj woh kaise hamdard ban sakte hai* (Have those he called killers yesterday turned friends)?" asks a BMAC leader.

Enthused by this groundswell of minority support Singh has sought to sustain it by giving it an altogether new dimension. "Social justice and secularism" are the twin planks on which he has based his current campaign in an effort to elevate it to a sublime plane. Many Muslims however, are critical of the Janata Dal's unkept promises. It had promised to create an anti-riot task force but did not do so. It had also reneged on its commitment—under BJP pressure—to give legal status to the Minorities Commission.

SINGH and his think-tank do not see any solution in the offing for a different reason though. Ram Vilas Paswan, his close lieutenant in the Mandal movement, thinks a solution will be difficult to arrive at: "The temple is the only issue on the BJP agenda. They have to keep it alive till the elections," he says.

So does the Janata Dal. At least to assure that the Congress(I) and the Janata Dal(S) do not chew away any of its vote base. These two new-found allies are trying to spread the theory of Singh's secret understanding with the VHP. There could be some trouble however from within too, for Arun Nehru and his coterie are planning to launch a subtle middle-of-the-road campaign condemning the harsh measures against the kar sewaks. The Congress(I) has already started taking desperate measures to build bridges with the Muslims. Says Tariq Anwar of the All India Quami Tanzeem: "Muslims are realising that V.P. Singh only paid lip service to their interests."

—BHASKAR ROY

THE MOOD

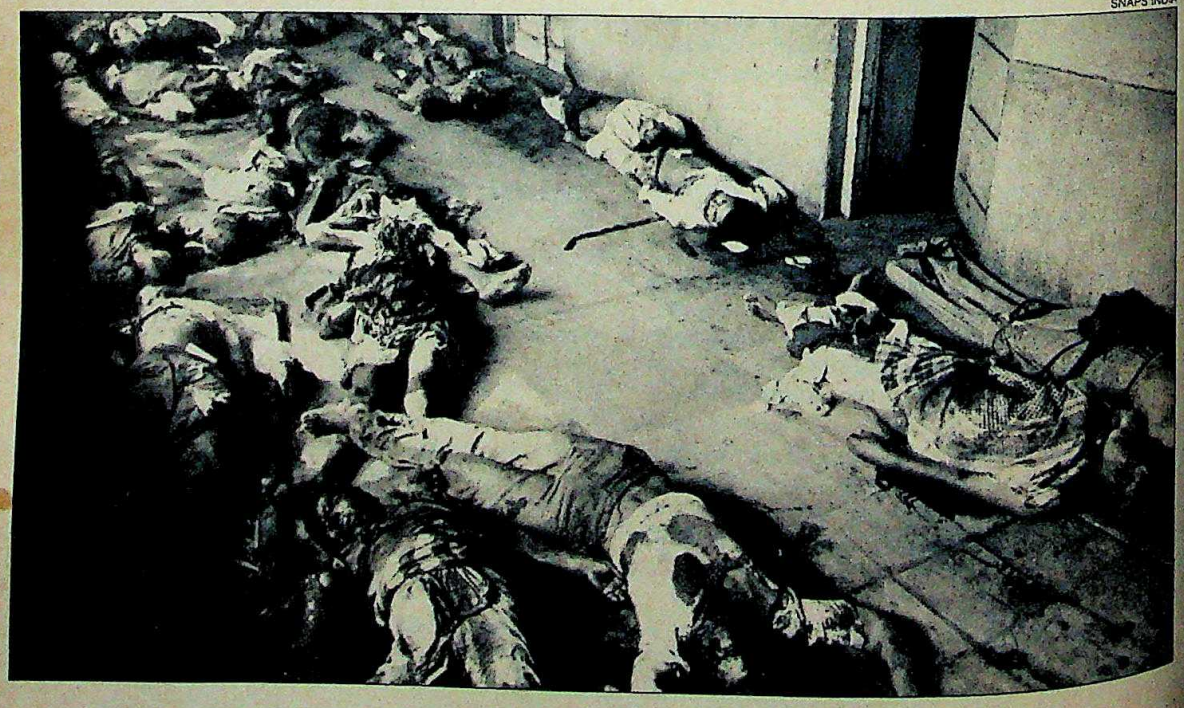
Anger and Anguish

As communal fires rage across the country there is a sense of bewilderment at the way the issue is being dragged on.

By INDERJIT BADHWAR

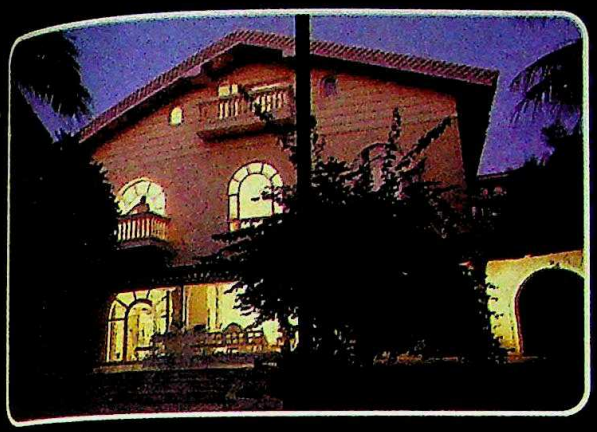
COMPARED with the October 30 kar sewa that cut a bloody swathe of violence and destruction across Ayodhya, the December 6 "satyagraha" passed off relatively peacefully with the arrest of about 1,500 Ram sewaks and about 800 on the next day. But even as the Babri Masjid-Ram Janmabhoomi tangle remained unresolved the tension across the country and worsening of communal relations was palpable. Its most horrific manifestation was in Hyderabad and Aligarh where more than 100 people died in some of the worst communal rioting that the cities have

SNAPS INDIA



Bodies of riot victims at the Osmania Hospital, Hyderabad: mounting tension

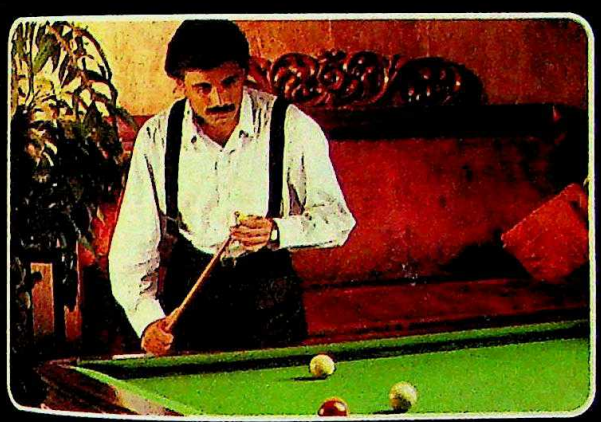
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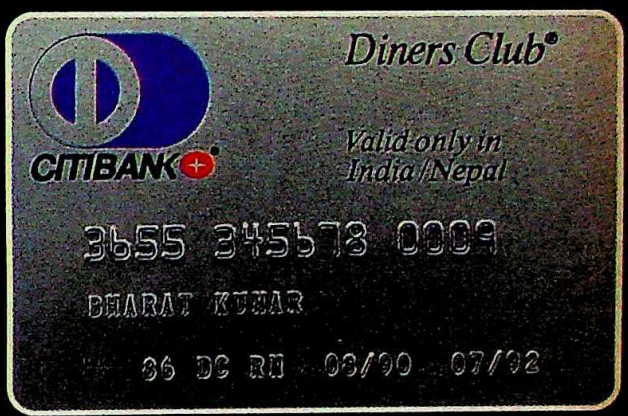
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His Game



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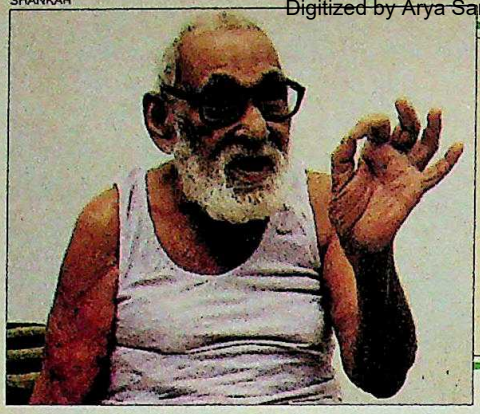
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The Rewards of Success

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SHANKAR



MOIDU MOULAVI, 104
Freedom fighter, Calicut

Both Hindus and Muslims are wrong as far as their perception of the issue goes. They are killing each other in the name of God because they have not understood the essence of religion.

ever experienced. And as injuries from indiscriminate stabbings mounted to several hundred, life in Aligarh came to a standstill with the indefinite closure of all schools and colleges.

The situation in Hyderabad was so alarming that the city was handed over to the army for restoration of law and order. The crisis rattled the Chenna Reddy Government when Animal Husbandry Minister Srinivasulu Reddy resigned his post charging the chief minister of "being personally responsible for the bloodshed in Hyderabad and other parts of the state".

But even while the mood in cities and villages across the country remained ugly and militant—inflamed to a large extent because of the October 30 killings—there were voices of sanity, too. More, there was a surprisingly increasing awareness both among Hindus and Muslims that succumbing to fears and hatreds being fanned by politicians for electoral gains would simply pull the nation into even deeper depths of religious and social despair.

But one thing was clear. The Hindus are in an uncharacteristically aggressive mood, Muslims insecure and searching and groping for ways to lower the temperature while trying to ensure that they will not be pushed into any abject religious surrender that would hurt their deepest sensibilities.

An additional trigger to Hindu rage, particularly in Uttar Pradesh, the crucible of the current strife, has been the *asthi kalash* (urns of ashes) of the kar sewaks killed in Ayodhya being taken around. At one level, albeit on a relatively small scale, these developments have led to preparations for an all-out communal conflict and the growing fear that the extremists may even resort to terrorism.

ON December 8, for example, the Faizabad police recovered 28 dynamite sticks from two young Hindu activists—both allegedly belonging to the Shiv Sena. One of the youths, Suresh Ram of Mathura, was arrested while the other, Sawant Gao of Maharashtra, escaped. Suresh Ram candidly admitted, under police questioning, that they had plans to blow up the Babri Masjid. The dynamite was seized from a place situated at a distance of a mere 2 km from the shrine. Illicit arms have also been seized in large numbers from Kanpur and Lucknow. The result is that out of the 63 districts, the police and PAC posts are stationed at almost every road crossing in 47 districts.

Passions have scaled frightening heights in Gujarat. In a gory incident last fortnight in Godhra, the headquarters of Panchmahal district, two women teachers were hacked to death in their school by members of another community, retaliating against an equally ghastly incident in a nearby village in which eight men—most of them traders—were slain and then burnt by a frenzied mob. Though as many as 80 persons have been killed and over 400 injured in Gujarat in the past 45 days, these two incidents symbolise the fury that the Ram Janmabhoomi-Babri Masjid issue has unleashed, particularly in the rural areas of the state.

In the tribal belts of eastern and central Gujarat, bridges between the two communities have been destroyed. Says Anil Sevak, 23, a priest at the Krishna temple at Dakor in Kheda district: "If Hindus can't build a temple in Hindustan then they should commit mass suicide. The blood of the innocents shed in Ayodhya should not be allowed to go waste."

In the small villages in Bharuch, Gujarat, one of the worst affected districts and dominated by tribals, the kar sewaks are the new heroes of the Hindus. "Kar Sewak Sanmaan", as the functions are called, draw huge crowds. And they include all—Adivasis, Harijans, Brahmins, Banias and Patels. One of the most dangerous fall-outs of the Ayodhya crisis in Gujarat is that it has pitted the Adivasis and lower caste Kshatriyas—who are covered by the

UMASHANKAR DUBEY, 24
Priest, Durga Mandir, Bhopal

If the Masjid is not moved from the site, it will be unacceptable to the Hindus. It is not good if people die for it. The Hindus will not press for other shrines to be converted if this one is handed over to them.

ALOK TIWARI



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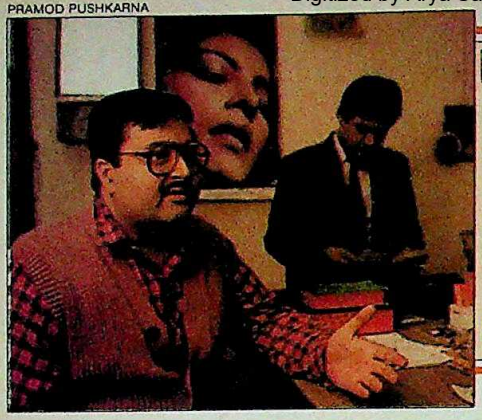
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PRAMOD PUSHKARNA



DR AJAY PANT, 40
Medical Practitioner, Moradabad

"I would blame the Congress policy of appeasement for this dispute. Hindus must concentrate on removing the ills of the religion like untouchability, dowry, instead of harping for temples."

Mandal Commission—against the Muslims. Extremely militant when provoked, these caste groups have the potential to make the life of Muslims in small villages a living hell.

In fact, except for big towns where they are in large numbers, the Muslims are running scared. More than the Babri Masjid—most of them refuse to talk about it—they are worried about their own lives. In Dediapada, a taluka town in Bharuch district, about 70 Muslim families are huddled together in a relief camp. The families fled their villages and hid in the jungles.

And for their plight these Muslims also blame their brethren in big cities who indulge in violence. Says Anwar Malik, 35, owner of a small *dhaba* in Lunawada, near Godhra: "We are mortally terrified. Muslims in big towns don't realise that when they attack Hindus, it is we who have to face the music in the villages."

It is the same story in Maharashtra. And most understandably so in Bhiwandi which has twice been rocked by communal earthquakes, the last time in May 1984, when the township burned for three days, requiring military presence even in Bombay. There is a sense of outward calm, and Muslim leaders try to reassure their community, saying everything will be normal. But the burqa-clad women of Nizampura and Azimnagar who had borne the brunt in 1984, need some firmer assurances.

At the Weaver's Co-operative School in Bhiwandi, schoolgirls reveal that they had left the town in anticipation of trouble on October 30, and once again may do so—at their parents' behest. Says Rukhsana Sheikh Usman, 13: "We were afraid so we went away to our *badi-ammi* in Kalyan."

BUT strangely, perhaps because they sense a coming victory, in a marked contrast to their vitriolic utterances in the past, Hindu leaders have shown considerable restraint this time. The Shiv Sena office, a fortress-like structure near Shaheen Talkies, is unusually shut, and there are no saffron banners or buntings. No Ram Janmabhoomi posters are plastered on the walls either.

But in private conversations Hindus are deeply struck by the call for Ram Janmabhoomi. Says Ajay Sakhalkar, a student at Bhiwandi's only college: "The Muslims should realise that they are a minority and give the masjid for us to rebuild a big temple." And many ordinary Muslims seemed resigned to their fate. As one leading Muslim professional—unwilling to go on record—said: "We are willing to give up the masjid, because nobody prays in that mosque anyway and there is even an idol there. We want to be left in peace. But we want this to be the end and not the beginning of such controversies. We do not want the VHP and the RSS opening the matter of 3,000 temples."

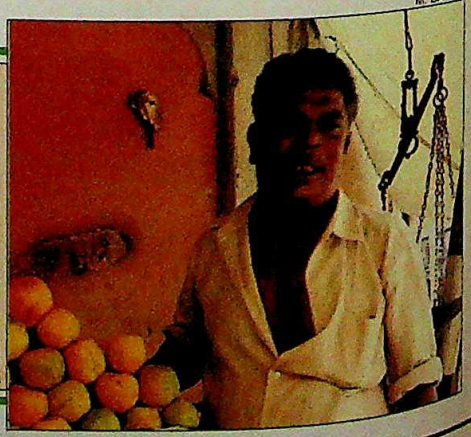
Even Kerala with the highest literacy rate in the country has been smitten by the communal sword. Predominantly Hindu localities have become a centrestage of RSS activity. Hindus and Muslims now mouth communal sentiments taking extremist views on the issue. The common people of the state, who are more educated than most of their counterparts elsewhere, are clear about one thing: politicians have created an issue which was clearly avoidable. Points out Mohammed Hanifa, a fruit seller in Trivandrum: "This is purely a political problem created by vested interests. If people have become communal today, political parties have to take the blame for that."

And this is the essential conundrum throughout the country. Hindus, who see through the political designs behind the fanning of the communal issue, are not unduly bothered and seem ready to be used by politicians provided they can secure from them the temple. Their physical and psychological participation in the "cause" is infectious. Strong feelings on the issue still persist among mem-

MOHAMMED HANIFA, 50
Fruit Seller, Trivandrum

"This is purely a political problem created by vested interests and political parties. If people have become communal today, political parties have to take the blame for that."

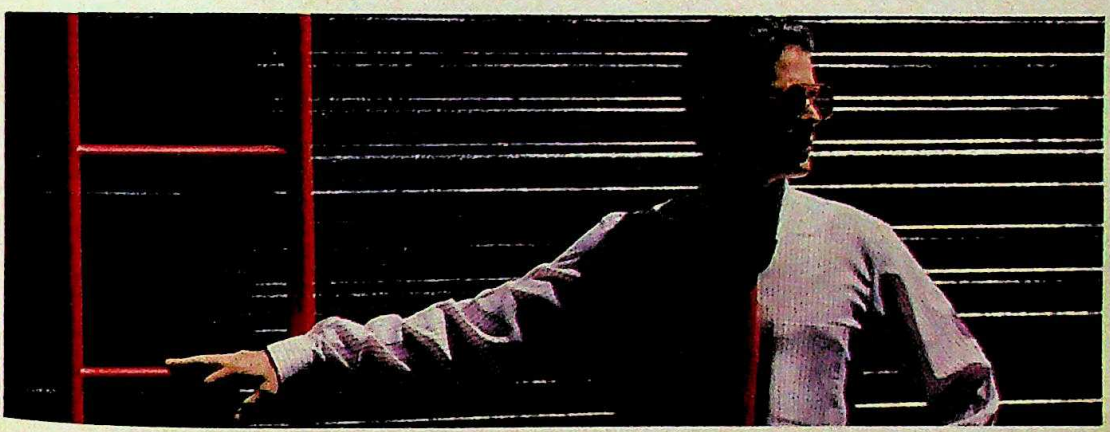
M. BALAN



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Sky



Manscapes *by* Park Avenue

The Shirt. To rise above confusion..

To stand apart and gain strength.

in quietness. The key to the ascent of man.

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HEMANT PITHWA



AKHTAR ANSARI, 29
Schoolteacher

Students are worried. Parents are also worrying this time. Children do not talk openly even with teachers. I was never apprehensive of being an Indian, but now I am, because of the VHP-BJP.

bers of both the communities.

What is most striking is the awareness of the temple dispute as an issue. It seems to have percolated down to the lowest rung of the society. Most people, on both sides, realise that the dispute is really political and it is being used by the politicians for their ends. But the knowledge doesn't prevent them from having an opinion which is mostly divided on communal lines.

And yet, because no one really wants to be the victim of communal rioting, good sense has been able to prevent imminent catastrophe. There have been numerous attempts to incite communal riots in half-a-dozen districts. In Lucknow beef was found in a temple last week and when the Hindus began to collect into a mob, somebody discovered a loaf of pork outside a mosque nearby. A potentially devastating riot was prevented when leaders on both sides promptly removed the meat from the religious places and pleaded for peace.

That's not the only ray of hope. Bihar, of all places, the venue of murderous religious riots, is showing a spirit of accommodation. In what is a totally unexpected development, the Ayodhya controversy has, ironically, brought Hindus and Muslims closer in many places. In Fatuha, a small town in Patna district, there is the famous Kachori Dargah, the *mazar* of Hazrat Peer Shahabuddin Jagjet, where every Thursday thousands of people, a majority of whom are Hindus, come to seek the blessings of the Peer. Said Mohammad Sharfuddin, 55, imam of the Dargah: "None stopped coming even at the time when the Ayodhya controversy was at its peak." In front of the Dargah a mandir and a masjid stand side by side. But no pujari or *namazi* has felt disturbed by the Ayodhya controversy.

SUCH feelings are becoming common. Syed Najmuddin, 45, a business executive, says candidly: "If a referendum is held on the question of shifting of the Babri Masjid, without provoking religious feelings, I am sure 99 per cent Muslims would favour it." Intones Gauri Pandit, 50, a potter *(kumhar)* in Fatehja village, 20 km east of Patna: "We don't know about the past, we don't know if Ram was born in Ayodhya or not or if there was a temple before the masjid was built. We know only one thing: because of this controversy our livelihood is in jeopardy."

Even in communally sensitive places like Moradabad, the talk among Hindus, even though aggressively pro-temple and against "appeasement of minorities", is edging towards compromise. The fanatics, of course, are still there. But there is a sense of fatigue about the issue hanging fire for such a long time. People want to get over with it and get on with their lives. Everybody will be mighty relieved if the Ram Janmabhoomi issue is resolved through talks. But the bottomlines for both communities remain. For Hindus it is that the temple must come up and for Muslims it is that the Babri Masjid should remain.

A permanent solution may not be in sight yet and tensions will not disappear overnight. But the ray of hope is that Hindus and Muslims, as in rural and mofussil Bihar, have begun to talk to each other, rather than trust politicians. Parvez Akhtar, 30, a primary school teacher at Maujipur village, narrated his experience during rioting in eastern parts of Patna in the wake of police assault on kar sewaks in Ayodhya: "During the riots, villagers, mostly Hindus, used to come to me daily and asked me not to worry as they would not allow any harm done to me. Not even for a day was the school closed and I felt for the first time that there is no difference between the Hindus and the Muslims."

If the spirit of Maujipur prevails, there will always be solutions.

Reported by: DILIP AWASTHI, ALOK TIWARI, FARZAND AHMED, RAMESH MENON and UDAY MAHURKAR

NEERJA SHUKLA, 35
Housewife, Lucknow

This is the result of the lopsided attitudes of the politicians. The Hindus have always received step-motherly treatment from them and are now rebelling against the politicians.

R.K. GUPTA



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Air



Manscapes *by* Park Avenue

The Trouser. To breeze through the rhythms of life. And remain unruffled by the bustle of existence. To be seldom heard. Yet always noticed.

Park Avenue
by RAYMONDS

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JUST 8 MONTHS TO GO !

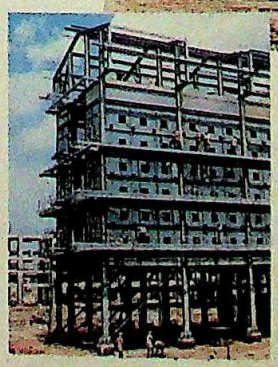




NAGARJUNA FERTILIZERS TO GO ON STREAM IN AUGUST 1991.

Project site at Kakinada, Andhra Pradesh humming with activity. Major items of equipment arrived – under erection. ■ Most of the civil works completed – prill tower, DM plant building, process plants, 120m high chimney, control room, workshop, offices, compressor houses for urea and ammonia, and laboratories. ■ State grid power available. Captive power generation provided for uninterrupted operation and maintaining high production levels. ■ Rs. 785 crore Nagarjuna plant racing to go on stream in August 1991 – seeking to establish a record for project completion of a plant of this size.





NFCL

Nagarjuna Fertilizers and Chemicals Limited

Nagarjuna Hills, Hyderabad.

Imageads/NFCL/corp-M (254)

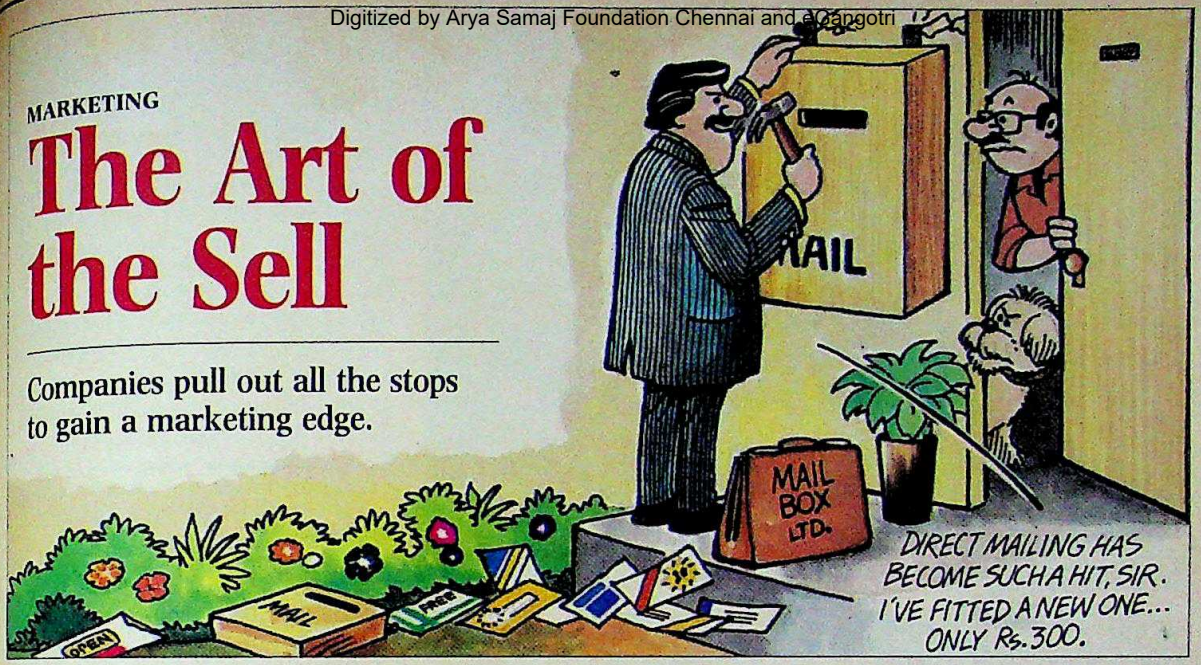
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MARKETING

The Art of the Sell

Companies pull out all the stops to gain a marketing edge.



By SALIL TRIPATHI and SHIV TANEJA

■ At a high security software export unit at the Santa Cruz Electronics Exports Processing Zone in Bombay, a woman in a blue sari rounds up women employees and offers them a sample each of a new sanitary napkin. Result: a national market share of 9.3 per cent in just four months.

■ A young banker receives a lavishly produced catalogue—for which he has paid Rs 30—offering fashionware and household goods. He and his wife fill out an order form for clothes and kitchenware worth Rs 2,300.

■ A company executive receives a call asking if he has heard of the new consumer finance scheme of a multinational bank. Would he like to place Rs 30,000 in a new financial instrument specially designed for people like him?

WELCOME to the age of Relationship Marketing. As the market-place gets more competitive and consumers more discerning, manufacturers all over the country are cashing in on this new marketing buzzword. Now, they don't just knock at your door and hawk you vacuum cleaners and fire extinguishers—they inundate your mail box with junk mail; they observe your expenditure pattern and follow you to your favourite store and pounce on you with an unexpected product. And they've even begun to get you on the phone.

But the first step remains direct mail. Till now restricted to *Readers Digest* books and Bullworker exercises equipment, the latest to jump on to the direct mail bandwagon is the 60-year-old retail and export house, Burlington's. As Burlington's sent out mailers for catalogues to be bought, it received orders at the rate of 250 a day from towns as unexpected as Bhatinda and Jhunjhunu. Anticipated turnover at the end of the first year: Rs 2.5 crore. But, says Burlington's managing partner Andre Kapoor: "We anticipate a quadrupled turnover."

Relationship marketing makes eminent sense: instead of spreading the advertising rupee thinly over millions of readers of a newspaper or viewers of a popular television programme, go for the jugular. Example: a professional earning over Rs 1,50,000 annually and living in a posh locality like Bombay's Malabar Hill or Hyderabad's Banjara Hills. Says Dilip Thakore, chief executive, Datamatics Direct: "We give companies finely focussed targets at a low cost."

At about a rupee an address, it is not an idle boast. That's probably why companies like TTK selling coloured condoms and the UB group enticing you with Bagpiper gold, have wisened up to the act. Also, negligible distribution costs and severely curtailed advertising costs buoy this trend. But direct mail is only the beginning. A National Council for Applied Economic Research study concludes the size of the market for direct mail at Rs 1,000 crore.

Direct Selling

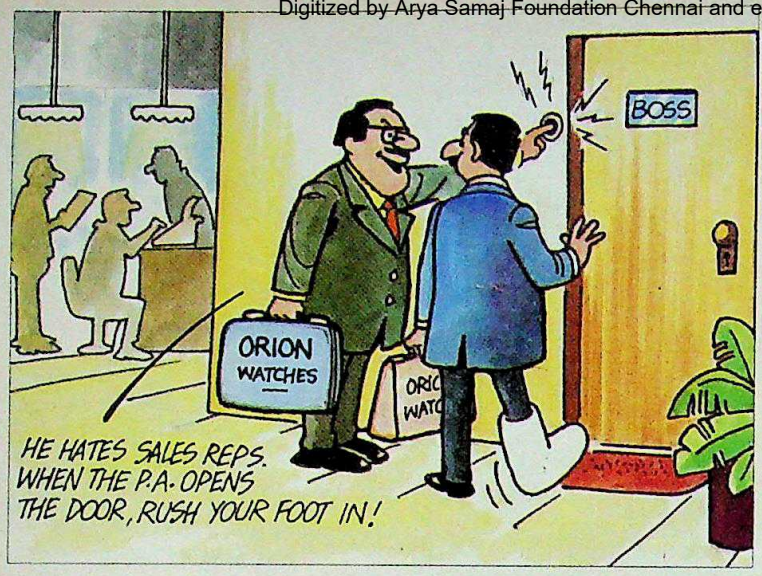
Apart from direct mail, many companies are also taking to direct selling in a big way. And with good reason. For instance, every time a Eureka Forbes or a Ceasefire



Cartoons by AJIT NINAN and ANIL SHARMA

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salesperson comes calling, he's in control of the situation, unlike in a retail outlet, where his brand is crying for attention with 10 others confusing the consumer and making him postpone his decision endlessly. Says Pheroze Engineer, chief executive, Real Value Appliances: "What we do is to bridge the fence-sitting stage."

These two companies have transformed the unedifying image of the door-to-door salesperson who invariably had the door slammed on his face mid-sentence through intensive training of salespeople. The new salesperson is a young confident executive who has the backing of a reputed organisation selling a reliable product. Says Akhil Marfatia, managing director of Eureka Forbes: "Direct selling works effectively for products which require demonstration and education on changing habits."

Both companies have a salesforce exceeding 2,000 people, a network that encompasses India, and a product available only through direct selling. By 1992, Eureka Forbes will have sold its products in at least half a million Indian homes. Ceasefire already sells 80,000 hand-held halon gas fire extinguishers every month.

Institutional Selling

Also cashing in on the consumer financing boom are companies such as Philips. Their modus operandi: they entice a body of captive consumers—usually the employees of a large company—and offer them their products. The finance, in turn, comes from the mushrooming consumer financing companies such as 20th Century Finance, Classic Financial, or the State Bank of India.

Clearly, institutional selling has proved to be a runaway success. Big orders (Rs 30 lakh plus) have already been bagged from big companies such as Telco and BHEL. In fact, in the first year itself, incremental sales through institutional selling grew by as much as 15 per cent. Says Manohar David, vice-president, consumer electronics at Philips: "In a stagnating m

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market, institutional selling is doing great things for our bottom line." And with sales rapidly shooting up because of institutional selling, it isn't difficult to understand the reason why Onida and Videocon have also joined the fray.

However, the most successful as far as institutional selling is concerned has been Titan watches: over the past three years, institutional business has doubled every year. Evidence of its stupendous success: over 500 companies including *The Times of India*, ICL, P&G, NTPC and Shaw Wallace have bought Titan watches in bulk.

But Titan watches isn't the only one to make a killing by institutional selling. Apart from it, companies such as Brooke Bond and Lipton's have also identified large institutions with huge needs of tea and coffee annually, to sell directly and grab a large slice of the market. And it's as clear as rainwater as to why they are also getting into the act. The principle being, the buyer gets a good rate, the seller, an assured source of revenue.



Telemarketing

But direct selling and institutional selling are just the beginning of the story. A large chunk of the Indian market can be accessed through the powerful medium of the telephone. Quick to realise the vast potential of the humble little telephone, companies are increasingly making use of India's rapidly expanding telephone network for selling. Apart from the ease of it, selling on the phone is gaining popularity because its range is tremendous: from small localities to large organisations, it can target them all. Not surprisingly, companies such as Magus Marketing Information Support and AdFactors have already begun dialling. Says S. Shyam Sunder, director, Magus: "There is less waste of time and you get more focussed attention in as little as one minute." Used effectively in selling financial services, Magus, set up in early

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UNIFY

When one leader supports another, confidence is redefined.

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1989, is now experimenting with completely automated telemarketing for office equipment and consumer goods.

More recently, AdFactors helped to launch the home delivery service of Santoor restaurant in Bombay's Cuffe Parade area by calling people on the phone rather than pushing leaflets under the door. And its efforts were certainly not wasted. Result: dozens of take-away orders. Says Yogesh Parekh, Adfactors chief: "The restaurant is now a big hit." And their phone never stops ringing.

Sampling

Direct mail. Direct selling. Telemarketing. But that's not all. Relationship marketing also makes use of another very lucrative method: sampling. When multinational giant Procter and Gamble (1989 turnover Rs 70 crore) launched its premium-priced Whisper sanitary napkins, in all its launch cities it claimed to have tapped every woman who has ever bought a branded napkin. Says Brand Manager Vinita Dang: "We know that women are sceptical about product claims, particularly high-risk products like sanitary napkins." In such a high-risk area of selling, sampling offered the best solution. Result: 70 per cent of women tapped repeated orders for a product priced 17 per cent higher than the competition.

Another company to make innovative use of sampling is Classic Touch, a Bangalore-based marketing firm. It sampled Birla 3M Post-It note pads by sticking a sheet of the notepad on a personalised letter addressed to senior executives. Says Pankaj Sethi, executive director, Classic Touch: "Our idea was to get the letter past the secretary."

Working along the same lines have been a team of pinstripe-suited young men from Godfrey Philips who go office-to-office offering free sticks of the relaunched Rothman's cigarettes. ITC has been employing much the same marketing strategy for its Classic brand of cigarettes—even packaging them in a leather cigarette box to make them appear more attractive.

Follow-the-Customer

Probably the most innovative form of selling is what companies like Titan watches and Bata are currently engaged in. Apart from making use of institutional selling, Titan has also effectively employed what can be described as

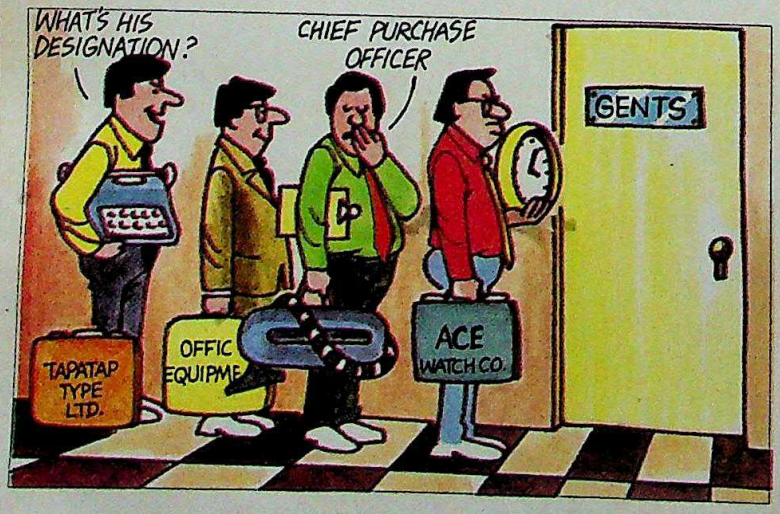


the 'follow-the-customer' strategy. Titan has identified the Titan man or woman—or the person who is most likely to wear a Titan—and based on his psychograph, catches him at jewellery stores, boutiques, book shops, and even restaurants or places where he is least likely to find a watch—and displays an amazing array of fascinating watches. Says Ravi Kant, vice-president, sales and marketing, Titan: "We attract the discretionary income against competing products at non-traditional outlets."

But if some companies go all out to sell a particular product, there are others that sell an entire life-style. For instance, Bata offers not just shoes any more, but outdoor gear, rucksacks, backpacks and clothes. Says Atul Mathur, marketing services manager of Market-Links, a marketing consulting division of Lintas: "Many of these campaigns are brand enhancement programmes. Here you aren't selling a product, but a life-style."

Whether it is institutional selling, direct selling, sampling, or simply just selling, the goal is now the same: to lock in a consumer so that he remains loyal to your brand till death do them part. The emphasis is now shifting to subtle sell: by identifying a consumer, showing that the company really cares for him, make him a lifelong ally. Although the initial expenses of this exercise may be high, it is the immense long-term value of a loyal customer that makes the money spent well worth it. Studies internationally have shown that a loyal customer pays back the initial investment—by being faithful to the brand and by publicising it through word-of-mouth—by a mind-boggling multiplier of over 200.

Selling, clearly, is not going to be the same any more. The next time the travelling salesman rings twice, don't guard your daughter, grab your wallet. For he's got designs on it.



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Frost



Manscapes *by* Park Avenue

The Pullover. To set ice on fire. And bask
in its embers. To let your warmth flow
in a never ending stream of humanity.

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Style. It never goes out of fashion.

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From a grain of sugar to a drop of oil



Triveni is one of India's fastest growing Groups. After decades of leadership in the sugar industry, the Group is repeating the success story in several other challenging areas.

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FRONTIERS OF Triveni



Triveni in sugar

60 years' experience in the manufacture of sugar and 30 years' in the execution of sugar plants.

Leadership in India. Over 35 important turnkey projects executed worldwide.

Optimising the returns of over 25,000 farmers.

And now breaking into energy efficient agri complexes with the better utilisation of by-products like molasses and bagasse.

Triveni in power

Over 1000 steam turbines operational in India. By 1991, ongoing modernisation and expansion will bring capacity to a massive 200 steam turbines per annum.

Tapping non-conventional energy sources with mini-micro hydel turbines.

Industrial gas turbines that will help India stop the wasteful flaring of gas.

With turnkey power systems and accessories, Triveni is a driving force behind projects all over India. Making this possible is a large engineering base and systems design capabilities. And close association with world leaders.

Triveni in pollution control

Water pollution is a national priority. Triveni offers turnkey solutions. Developed with technology from the world leader. Water treatment, water conditioning, wastewater treatment, groundwater treatment, water reuse and hazardous waste treatment systems.

Triveni in oil and gas

Triveni is in the forefront of this critical endeavour.

Triveni Plenty Engineering Ltd. was India's first joint venture company in this sector. TPEL offers equipment and services for oil and gas production and handling and treatment for gas turbine feed stock.

Triveni Pool Intairdril Ltd. offers a wide range of air and foam drilling completion, workover, maintenance and oil & gas drilling services.

Triveni NL Ltd. has developed oilfield services like directional drilling, surveying, mud logging, mud engineering and other services and equipment.

Triveni in techno-collaboration with IRI will soon be manufacturing complete rigs and rig components for the largest range of rigs.

Triveni in technology

Today Triveni is your window in India to the world's best technology. Power : Dresser Rand, USA; Peter Brotherhood, UK; Ruston Gas Turbines, (part of GEC-Alsthom) UK; Societe ESAC, France.

Pollution control: Envirex Inc, USA.

Mineral beneficiation: Fives-Cail Babcock, France, Denver Process Equipment Ltd., UK.

Oil and gas: Plenty Ltd., UK; IRI International Corp, USA; Baroid Corp, USA; Pool Company, USA.

This outstanding pool of technology is one more reason for leadership.

Triveni in the future

Last year the Triveni Group's turnover was Rs. 120 crores.

Today the turnover is Rs. 170 crores.

By 1992, this will rise to Rs. 240 crores. And by 1993, Triveni will cross the Rs. 400 crore mark.

This is one face of the story. The other is of a Group that is constantly offering India better products, services and ideas. Together it's a winning combination.

THE Triveni ENGINEERING WORKS LTD.
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THE ENERGY PEOPLE

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BATHROOM FANTASIES FROM NOVA



The Alga Series from NOVA

A selection of fresh colours to choose from — Red, Black and Ivory white with glittering gold combination. The Alga Series — A feeling of ultimate superiority in bath fitting.

Alga SERIES

NOVA BATHROOM JEWELLERY

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CREDIT EXPANSION

So far India had one rating agency—the Credit Rating Information Services of India Ltd—which rates the equity and debt of companies. But now there may be more than just one. Recently, the Government sanctioned the setting up of another one by a financial institution. And by the middle of next year there ought to be yet another credit rating agency. But with a difference—it will offer ratings, not of companies, but of individuals.

To be set up by the promoters of Marketing and Business Associates, a Bangalore-based market research company, and Bombay-based Magus Marketing Information Support, a database and telemarketing company, the new company is to be a centralised database of credit behavior of individuals. When fully operational, it will allow a variety of institutions like for instance a credit card company, to check the credit worthiness of their prospective clients. Though not a new concept internationally—with companies like TRW, Equifax and Trans Union in the US offering this service already—it is still relatively new in the credit business.

PEDALLING ON

THE cycle industry seems to be pedalling away furiously towards an expansion. Way ahead in the race is the Rs 750-crore Murugappa group which is planning a major expansion of its companies in India in order to get more exports. As part of its expansion plans, a Rs 7-crore new cycle plant is coming up at Avadi near Madras with a capacity to make over 2,000 cycles per day. The plant, which will initially supply semi-finished cycles to importers in Europe and Mexico, should be commissioned by the beginning of January 1991. Group company TI Cycles, with a turnover of Rs 120 crore, has already bagged the Rs 15-crore export order from these countries.

That's not all. By February 1991, the company's merger with the already sick Bombay-based Rs 15-crore Press Metal Corporation should also come through. After the merger, TI's metal section division will also be making rolled-form metal sections for the automobile industry.

HIGH POWER EXPORTING

HINDUSTAN Electro-Graphites Ltd (HEG), the only manufacturer of ultra high power electrodes in the country, is aiming to achieve an export turnover of Rs 30 crore. The ultra high power electrodes technology is controlled by only a handful of multinationals in the US, Japan, France and Germany. The HEG plant at Mandideep near Bhopal, which underwent a Rs 10-crore expansion this year, has already carved out a market for itself in south east Asia and the Far East.

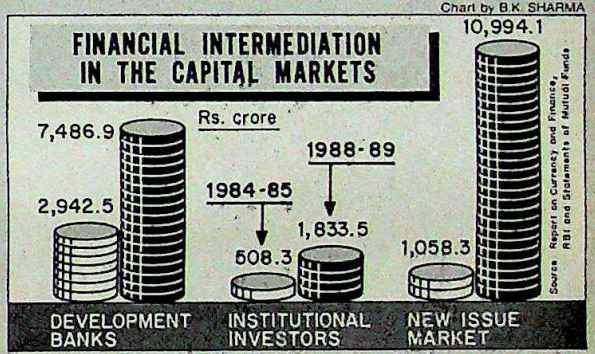
TAKING OFF COMMERCIALLY

JUST in case you thought you'd left the commercials behind when you got on to the aircraft, Air India has a surprise for you. Beginning January 1, Air India's in-flight entertainment will begin to pay for itself by showing advertisements from Indian companies like Parle Products, Crompton Greaves and Videocon, and foreign banks like ANZ Grindlays. There will also be video programmes 30 minutes before landing in any city in the world showing scenes of that city and giving information. And lastly, your friendly neighbourhood newscaster Prannoy Roy will be making exclusive, twice-weekly international news programmes for Air India.

FRESH FINANCING

IN India the traditional sources of financing for industry have been financial institutions like the Industrial Development Bank of India, the Industrial Credit and Investment Corporation of India and the commercial banks. These institutions and banks raised money from a

Chart by B.K. SHARMA



variety of sources including the capital market and individual depositors, and then disbursed these funds in industry. Now, disintermediation has set in.

Disintermediation is the process whereby companies bypass the traditional sources of funding—financial institutions and commercial banks—and go to the source of the funds: the individual investor. This massive growth is clear from the spurt in the new issues market: from Rs 1,058.30 crore in 1984-85 to an astonishing Rs 15,473.73 crore in 1989-90. By 1988-89, the monies raised in the new issues surpassed the sums raised through traditional sources.

CORPORATE CLEAN-UP

IF rumours in the banking circles are to be believed, Manohar Rajaram Chhabria is streamlining his Indian operations. Apparently, Chhabria, who at one stage couldn't have enough of the Indian corporate sector, is now chastened, and is very keen on cleaning up the red ink off his balance sheet. It is believed that on the block is his shareholding of the much-beleaguered Calcutta-based Genelec, Vikrant Tyres and Mangalore Chemicals. He is already out of L&T, having made a substantial profit on his holding, and might even pull out of Gammon India, if the price is right. Then he might devote much more time and money on his crown jewels, Shaw Wallace and Dunlop.

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NON-RESIDENT INDIANS

Asking for More

NRIs seize opportunity to demand more privileges

HE is the Indian everyone loves to hate: flashily dressed, he drinks bottled water, books airline seats en bloc during the holiday season, complains bitterly about "Indian efficiency", and walks away with prime allotments of land, blue chip stocks, and Maruti 1000s. He is the Non-Resident Indian (NRI). But many Indians prefer to call him Not Required Indian. Yet, it seems it is he who might turn out to be the knight in shining armour to rescue the damsel in distress that is the Indian economy with its many woes: 12 per cent inflation, foreign exchange reserves of Rs 3,050 crore (three weeks' imports), Gulf crisis bill of Rs 7,000 crore, budget deficit of Rs 13,000 crore, and industrial growth target downgraded from 10 per cent to 7.5 per cent.

Last fortnight, the Reserve Bank of India had once again raised the interest rates of Foreign Currency Non-Resident (FCNR) deposits—NRIs' most popular form of investing their hard-earned fortune and precious savings in India. NRIs responded by renewing their tough charter of three demands, which, if accepted, could transform substantially their status in India. The demands are: dual citizenship, voting rights, and a free economic and export processing zone in Andaman and Nicobar Islands exclusively for NRIs. Says Dubai-based Ram Buxani, chairman of the Non-Resident Indians' Economic Forum: "It would be a fantastic project which could transform the Indian economy."

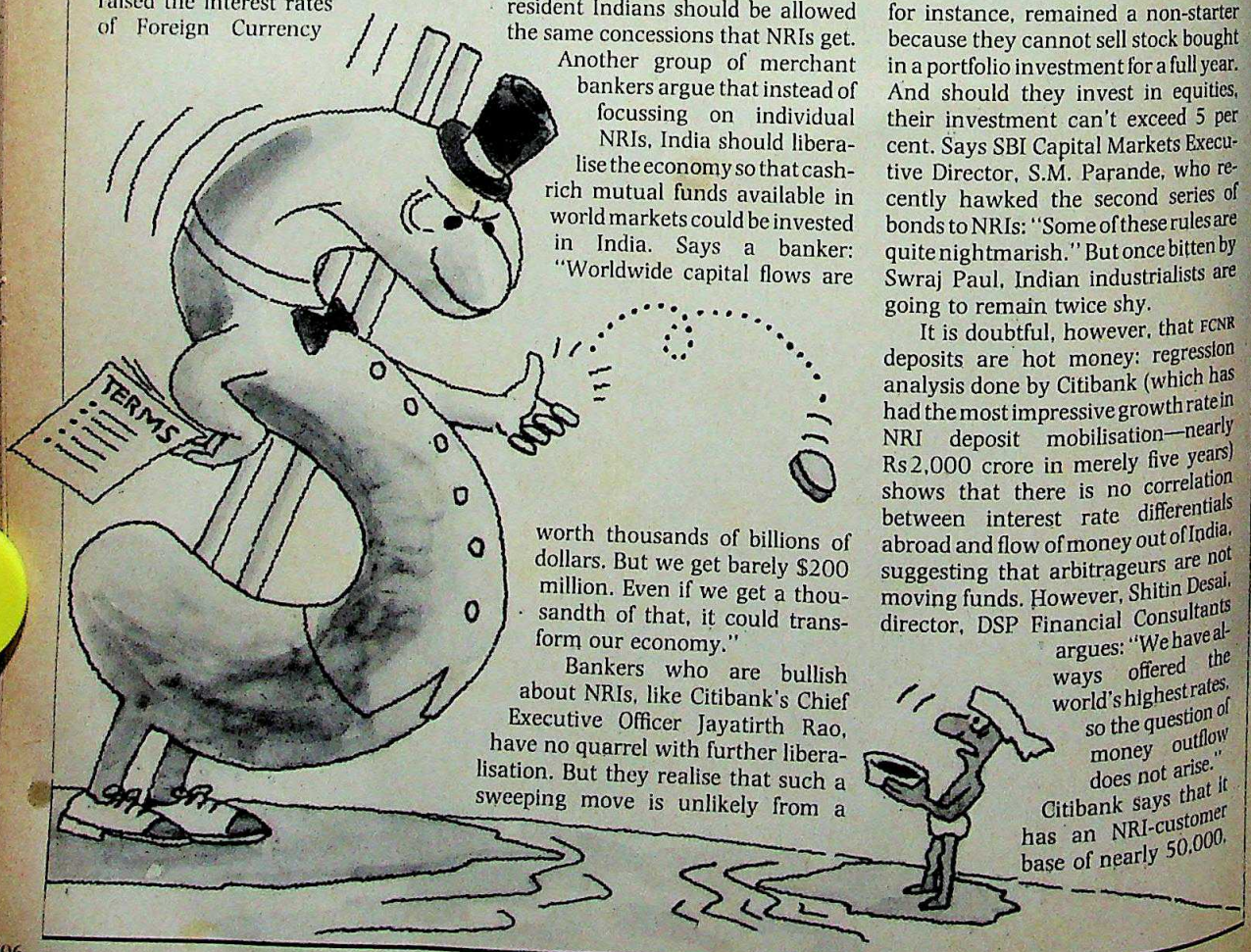
But what appears as conclusive logic to the NRIs leaves the experts in the country cold and hostile. Some bankers in Bombay contend that the NRIs already enjoy concessions way beyond necessary. They say the domestic economy should be freed, and resident Indians should be allowed the same concessions that NRIs get. Another group of merchant bankers argue that instead of focussing on individual NRIs, India should liberalise the economy so that cash-rich mutual funds available in world markets could be invested in India. Says a banker: "Worldwide capital flows are worth thousands of billions of dollars. But we get barely $200 million. Even if we get a thousandth of that, it could transform our economy."

Bankers who are bullish about NRIs, like Citibank's Chief Executive Officer Jayatirth Rao, have no quarrel with further liberalisation. But they realise that such a sweeping move is unlikely from a government run by 60-odd MPs, steeped in outmoded Fabian Socialism which has been buried deep even in countries which were until recently the prime proponents and exporters of that defeated doctrine. Privatisation, more foreign funds in India, and relaxation of FERA, appear beyond the Indian economic horizon. Rues R. Sankaran, director, Ind-Global Finance Trust: "We have needless fear of being swallowed by multinationals." Economic salvation, therefore, must piggyback on the son-of-the-soil who's made his fortune abroad.

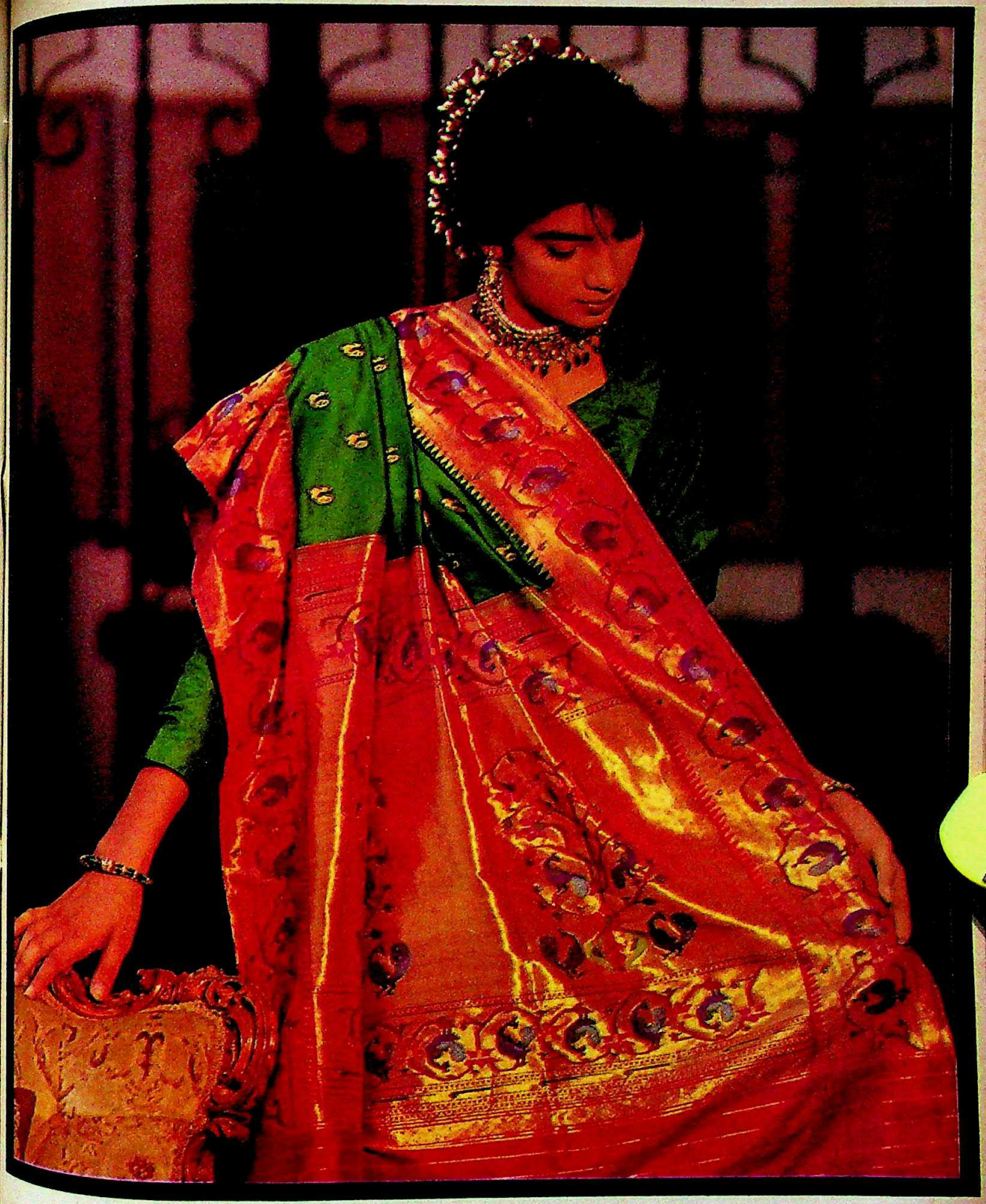
The issue assumes significance because last month, NRI deposits in India rose to an all-time high of Rs 18,000 crore, which is 10 per cent of the annual plan. The cost of such deposits is high: India offers the world's highest, fully-repatriable, tax-free interest rates. Says Sankaran: "FCNR is nothing but expensive, hot money."

Is it? NRIs argue that investments in shares is cumbersome and investment in plant and machinery is still mired in red-tape that saps the spirit of the most determined returning native, presumably spurred by patriotism. NRI Portfolio Investment Scheme has, for instance, remained a non-starter because they cannot sell stock bought in a portfolio investment for a full year. And should they invest in equities, their investment can't exceed 5 per cent. Says SBI Capital Markets Executive Director, S.M. Parande, who recently hawked the second series of bonds to NRIs: "Some of these rules are quite nightmarish." But once bitten by Swraj Paul, Indian industrialists are going to remain twice shy.

It is doubtful, however, that FCNR deposits are hot money: regression analysis done by Citibank (which has had the most impressive growth rate in NRI deposit mobilisation—nearly Rs 2,000 crore in merely five years) shows that there is no correlation between interest rate differentials abroad and flow of money out of India, suggesting that arbitrageurs are not moving funds. However, Shitin Desai, director, DSP Financial Consultants argues: "We have always offered the world's highest rates, so the question of money outflow does not arise." Citibank says that it has an NRI-customer base of nearly 50,000.



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VAMA

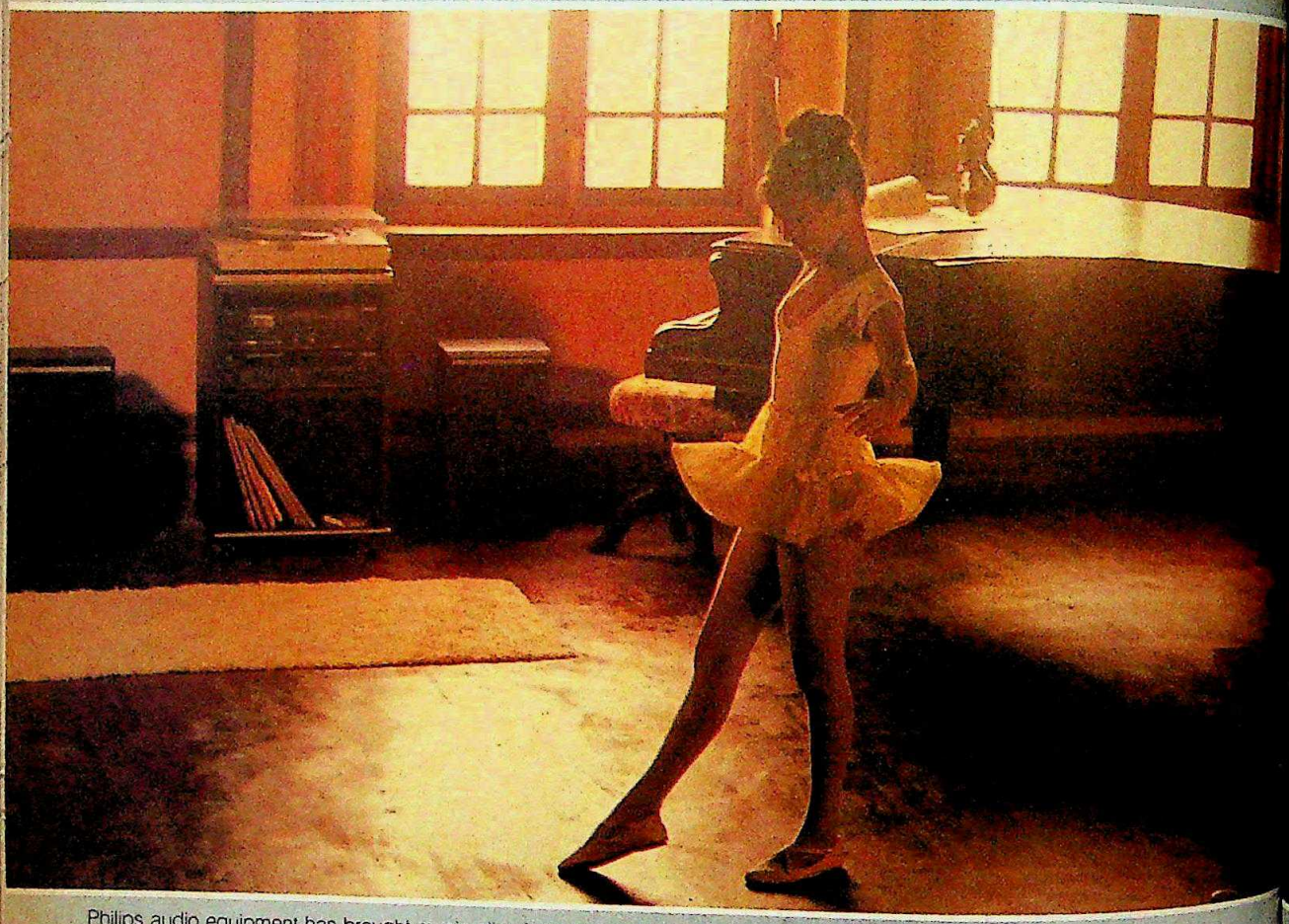
KANCHANJUNGA • PEDDAR ROAD • BOMBAY

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I AM PHILIPS. I AM TOMORROW.



Philips audio equipment has brought music alive for millions all over the world.

*Peico Electronics and Electricals Limited is an affiliate of N.V. Philips Gloeilampenfabrieken, The Netherlands.

Philips India

PHILIPS

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In a world where the future looks you in the face, few things are constant except change.

Philips* never forgets this. Yes, Philips gave the world the X-ray tube, the audio cassette, the laser video disc and the compact disc, and brought modern lighting and radio to India — but that was yesterday. Today's Philips is already in the future.



As always. Philips' extraordinary audio technology keeps breaking barriers with its crisp reproduction, incredibly accurate recording and an ever-increasing array of innovative features. Philips professional electronic equipment provides analytical, testing, communication and automation tools for changing R & D and industrial needs. Our components today lie at the heart of the world of electronics. Our lighting technology is so advanced that it sets the standards for others to follow.

And our TVs let you see right into tomorrow. We've given India our best for over 60 years. We'll do it for the next hundred.

FOR YEARS, WE'VE BEEN INVENTING THE FUTURE.

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PHILIPS

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Tainlight Flat Rigid Foamed PVC Sheets. Ideal for display and exhibition boards; partitions requiring acoustic and thermal insulation; false roofing; wall cladding; air-conditioning ducting, etc. Thicknesses range from 2mm to 12mm, with a width of 1.3m and a standard length of 2m. Longer lengths can be extruded, as required.

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The Superior Alternative

Tainwala Chemicals & Plastics India Limited
71, Kalpataru, Nutan Laxmi Society, J.V.P.D. Scheme, Bombay 400 049.
Tel: 6208067, 6207368. Telex: 011-78070 PCT IN. Fax: 6206256

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and the average deposit size is $16,000 (Rs 2.88 lakh). And 73 per cent of deposit holders hold less than $25,000 in FCNR (Rs 4,50,000)—amounts not large enough to create a gaping hole in India, should the money be pulled out by the holders who're not expected to act in tandem. Defending concessions to NRIs, Rao contends: "The expatriate Indian is a winner, and we might choose to call what he gets as a concession, but what he's getting are the kind of terms available to him in sophisticated financial markets abroad." However, FCNR remains an easy way out. While the growth has been impressive—213 per cent in five years—direct investment has risen sluggishly, and share investments even more so (*see chart*).

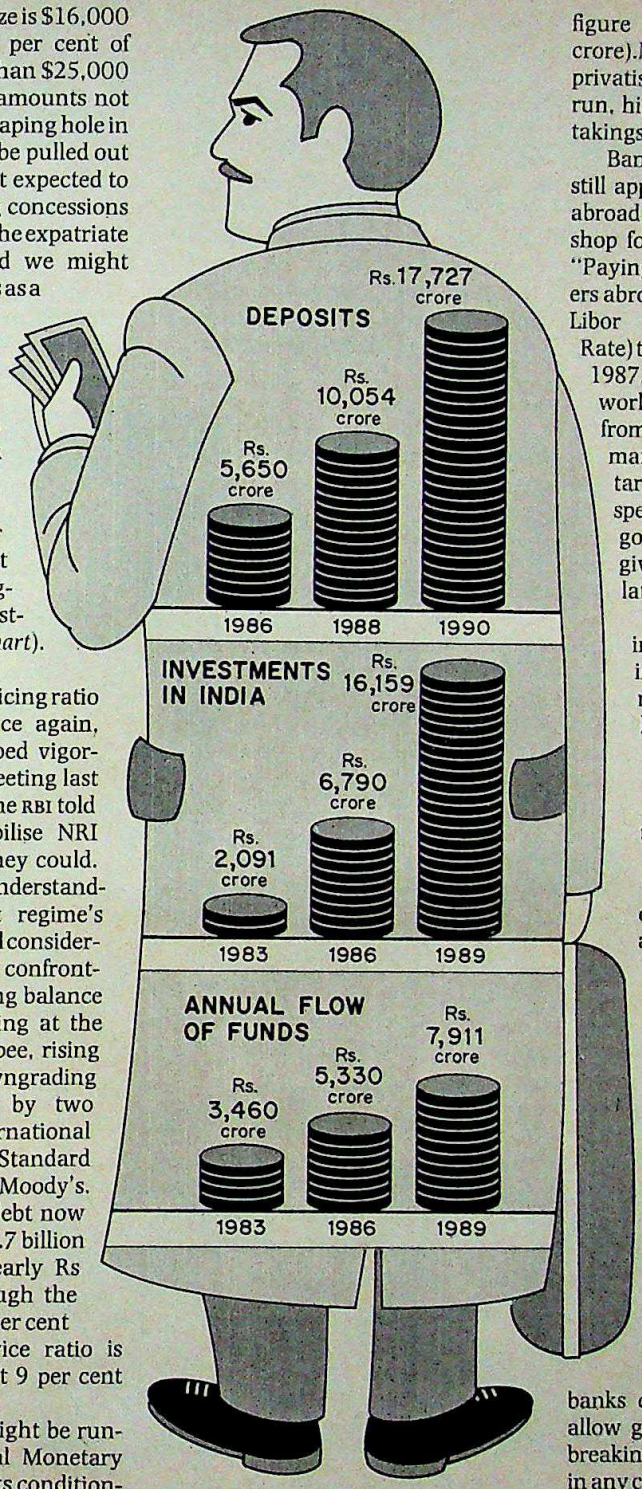


Chart by B.K. SHARMA

YET, with a debt-servicing ratio being very high once again, NRIs are being wooed vigorously. At a hush-hush meeting last fortnight, top officials of the RBI told foreign bankers to mobilise NRI resources as rapidly as they could. RBI's concern is indeed understandable, given the present regime's socialistic straitjacket, and considering the myriad problems confronting the economy: declining balance of payments, exports rising at the cost of a depreciating rupee, rising oil import bill, and the downgrading of India's credit-rating by two widely-respected international credit rating agencies, Standard and Poor's (S&P) and Moody's. Worse, India's external debt now stands at a whopping $69.7 billion (Rs 1,255 billion), or nearly Rs 1,300 per Indian. Although the external debt rose only 2 per cent last year, the debt service ratio is at 30 per cent, as against 9 per cent just 10 years ago.

And to top it, India might be running to the International Monetary Fund, which will impose its conditionality requiring subsidy cuts and opening of the economy. But for people like Devi Lal and Chandra Shekhar both the conditions are anathema. Says Raj Mundal, vice-president (international) of Creditcapital Finance Corporation: "It is already tough for India to get money from international sources for periods exceeding six months." Foreign investment in India, annually, stands at an abysmally low figure of $150 million (Rs 270 crore). Mundal's suggestion: partial privatisation through NRIs of well-run, high-profile public sector undertakings like Air India.

Bankers like Sankaran say there is still appreciation for Indian currency abroad, and that the country should shop for loans accordingly. Says he: "Paying higher interest to large lenders abroad is better than paying above Libor (London-Inter-Bank-Offered-Rate) to NRIs." He has a valid point: in 1987, when stock-markets crashed worldwide, NRIs withdrew money from India, although Indian stock-markets remained bullish with autarkic phlegm. However, Parande speaks up for NRIs: "If we are going to pay high rates, better to give them to NRIs than to multilateral agencies."

However, with China's entry into the IMF and with the opening up of Eastern Europe, international lenders are going to have many more opportunities to shop for buyers, and India, with its rigid structure will find it tough to get money for long-term finance.

In such a grim situation, NRIs, therefore, seem to be the only available alternative, with an investible surplus wealth of $45 billion (Rs 81,000 crore). Says Suren Khirwadkar, vice-president (non-resident consumer business), Citibank: "NRIs are the single-most important factor for liberalising the economy." In fact, Citibank has fairly ambitious plans to lock-in NRIs with India: upmarket customers receive gifts like cassettes of Lata Mangeshkar, and the bank would like to encourage NRI housing colonies, export *ganga jal*, and even recommends gold certificates, so that banks could—for a fee—legitimately allow gold to be imported into India, breaking the back of smuggling, which, in any case, brings in 90 per cent of gold exported out of Dubai into India.

Purists may find the ideas unwelcome, the schemes costly. But, costly or not, one thing is certain: like the cousin who made good abroad, the NRI will continue to be wooed vigorously by the Government, unless it shakes itself out of the straitjacket of socialism. Until then, the NRI will remain the harbinger of economic freedom in India. —SALIL TRIPATHI

While the FCNR growth has been impressive direct investment has risen sluggishly, and share investments even more so.

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ABHEY OSWAL

In The Dock

Tycoon held for FERA evasion

A product of the gung-ho '80s, Abhey Oswal's astronomical growth had left the corporate watchers gaping in wonder. But in trying to overreach himself, he has fallen foul of the law. His arrest last fortnight under the Foreign Exchange Regulation Act (FERA) by the Enforcement Directorate may prove to be a damper on the dreams of the trader-turned-tycoon. A scion of the Ludhiana-based family known mostly for woollens, Oswal, 42, had set up Oswal Agro Ltd in 1979 and within a decade was dabbling in a high-profile sector like petrochemicals.

High drama marked the headline-making arrest. As Oswal's flight from Bombay touched ground at Delhi on the morning of December 4, a posse of six directorate officers led by Assistant Director R.K. Sharma were waiting for him. He was served summons at the airport and whisked away to the directorate headquarters. After a gruelling two-hour session of questioning, Oswal was informed that he was under arrest on two counts of FERA violations. The chubby-faced industrialist, known for his relish for dramatics, immediately sprawled on the floor complaining of chest pain.

After initial medical examination, he was moved to Delhi's well-equipped Escorts heart hospital where the doctors took him in for check-ups. As his lawyers struggled in the courts for his bail, he remained lodged in the hospital. Their efforts received a setback when Delhi's additional chief metropolitan magistrate, M.L.Sahani, remanded him to judicial custody till December 21. His lawyers then moved the high court to get him out.

Oswal has been charged with evasion of custom duty through under-invoicing of imported goods and illegal foreign exchange transactions through his front companies based in London, Singapore and New York. They include Indo-Europe Food Ltd, Faevor Bond Ltd and Globe Enterprises, which were managed by Oswal's relation P.D. Jain. Oswal allegedly exported agro-products, mainly soya and rice bran extractions, to Indo-Europe at an under-invoiced price and further used those balance funds for under-invoicing his imports.

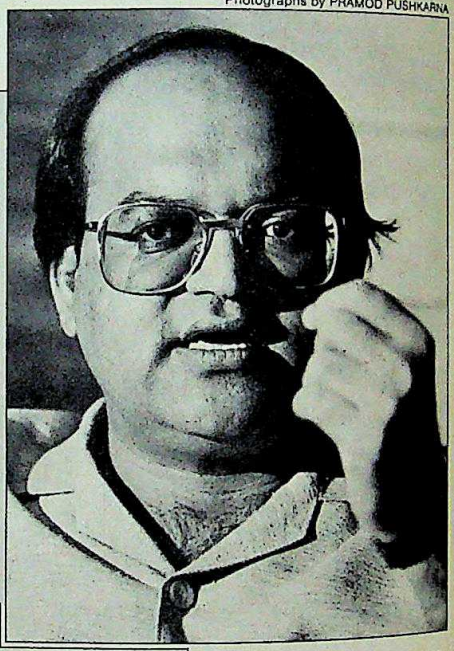
The investigating officers claim to have unearthed an account of Oswal in Swiss Banking Corporation, Chiasso, Switzerland. During questioning, Oswal admitted that he had the account but refused to give a letter of authority to the directorate to allow an investigation into the transactions made through it.

The directorate is also looking into the fate of the $6 million (Rs 10.8 crore) which was loaned by the London branch of Punjab National Bank to Indo-Europe. The money was advanced to Oswal Agro Mills as an interest-free loan but never reached India. It was allegedly used to make payments over and above the invoiced value for Oswal imports.

Further, Oswal is charged with bypassing import restrictions placed on his companies during 1983-85 as he floated another front company in India called Shahji International. The company imported portable gensets worth Rs 2 crore and TV sets worth Rs 29 lakh, getting them cheap by under-invoicing. The difference between the actual value and under-invoiced value was paid by Indo-Europe. Shahji sold the goods at cost price to Oswal Agro Mills which in turn resold them in India and made a whopping Rs 9 crore in profit. All the transactions, the directorate contends, were conducted without the approval of the Reserve Bank of India. Though the investigating officers haven't yet come out with exact figures, the alleged FERA violations may amount to several million dollars.

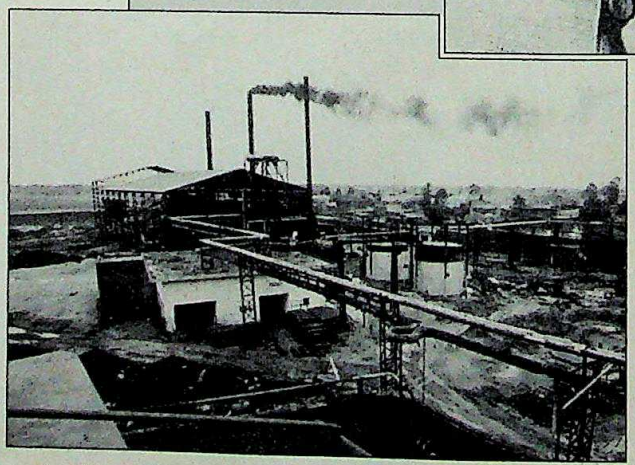
Whatever the merit of the charges, Oswal's arrest has rattled the corporate world and set them speculating about the motives of the Government. Some have even suggested that a Bombay-based giant industrial house, that has regained its political influence after the change in government in Delhi, may be behind the move as it feels threatened by Oswal's trespassing into what it considers its domain—petrochemicals. The arrest is also linked with the ongoing factional fight within Congress circles; Oswal was closely associated with an aide and friend of the former prime minister Rajiv Gandhi. Even last year eyebrows were raised when Oswal despite his comparatively

Photographs by PRAMOD PUSHKARNA



Though the case against Oswal seems strong, it clearly also has political contours.

Oswal; and his factory in Ludhiana: under fire



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He will spearhead the entire Refrigerator, Deep Freezer and Compressor Divisions of the Company, and provide efficient and dynamic leadership. This is a most challenging assignment demanding proven ability, a high calibre of professionalism and a deep sense of dedication. To the right type of Senior Executive, this will be a truly challenging assignment involving a tremendous amount of job satisfaction.

This key post involves total responsibility covering all areas of growth, development, planning, production, maximization of capacity utilisation, control of costs, and with, of course, the ability to provide leadership and forge a well-knit and motivated team. Flair for man-management and full knowledge of labour matters is most essential in this key position.

The Senior Executive we are looking for, would be a Graduate in Mechanical Engineering with preferably a Management or MBA qualification. He would have had at least 15 years experience in a light engineering industry, and of which at least the last 5 years should have been gained in a senior management position. Knowledge of mass production techniques relating especially to Machine Shop, Press Shop, Paint Shop, Assembly functions, etc., is rather essential.

Please apply in strict confidence giving full details of qualifications, experience, nature of duties performed, financial package presently being received, and that expected, to the Chairman and Managing Director.

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small capital base bagged the Rs 695 crore contract for setting up a fertiliser plant in Uttar Pradesh and Ambani-style went in for a mega issue of Rs 500 crore but unlike them it was under-subscribed by Rs 30 crore.

Indeed, Oswal's expansion plans of his petro-projects, in particular the expansion of the Chembur plant's ethylene capacity by one lakh tonnes per annum may have prompted pre-emptive action by his rivals. Predictably, the directorate officials hotly deny any string-pulling behind the crackdown on the Oswal group. They claim that Oswal and his companies were under investigation for more than six months. Sharma and Enforcement Officer R.K. Handoo had visited the UK and Germany twice to investigate Oswal's activities between July and September, much before the new Government was installed in Delhi.

There are others who argue that the chairman of Oswal group has been consumed by the fire of his own ambition. It is known that 10 years after the small-time trader started his corporate climb, his empire was worth about Rs 500 crore with a strong presence in the agro-industries.

SPURRED on by this success, Oswal set about to conquer the comparatively new and fast expanding field of petrochemicals and in quick succession took over among others Union Carbide's petro plant at Chembur in Bombay and ICI's unit at Rishra in West Bengal. Along the way he might have resorted to financial irregularities.

This is not to deny that trouble for embattled Oswal had started after the National Front government took charge last year. His group was among the few business houses that were brought under close scrutiny by that government (INDIA TODAY, July 31, 1990). Incidentally, the last high-profile FERA arrest of L.M. Thapar in 1986 was made under V.P. Singh as finance minister. But turning the heat on the Oswals had the inevitable fallout in the beating taken by Oswal's stock reputation—and price—in the country's share markets.

The group's dipping fortune has now climaxed in Oswal's arrest, hinting at harder times for him. If convicted, he is liable to face a seven-year jail term besides penalties. He may go scot-free as the history of convictions in white-collar crime is not very encouraging anywhere in the world. Yet Oswal might like to ponder over what went wrong and how the dream had soured.

—ALOK TIWARI with SHIV TANEJA in Bombay

SHOPPING

Carnival City

IF you don't associate fountains, fish ponds, free snacks and glamorous escorts with shopping, it's time you made your way to Bangalore's latest shopping paradise for the young. As long as you don't mind sharing the experience with 800-odd other families who visit Big Kids Kemp every day.

The shop that all Bangalore has been talking about since it opened at the beginning of the month is the size of a football field—at 20,000 sq ft it's the biggest in India. And also the weirdest and wackiest. The carnival atmosphere is reminiscent of Disneyland. It caters for toddlers to teenagers. The vast space is divided into sections for boys, girls, infants and teenagers. There's also a special partywear section.

As youngsters wander around looking for trendy outfits—which can sometimes mean crossing a big bridge—they are plied with toffees, cold drinks and ice-cream, courtesy the management. This perk, alas, runs out at the end of December. But the moving mannequins, which children have great fun trying to dodge, are a permanent fixture.

The owner, Vashi J. Melwani, has come a long way since fleeing Pakistan as a refugee after Partition. He calls his shop a 'cocktail for kids'.

MAHESH BHATT



Big Kids Kemp: razzle dazzle

He employs some 100 young and trendy sales assistants. If customers so wish, they can ask an assistant to 'escort' them around the shop.

While youngsters are scouring the shelves for clothes—ranging from Rs 30 for a pair of socks to Rs 1,500 for a dress—they can enjoy a brief respite from the hard work by getting their name printed on the front page of a newspaper or having an instant snapshot taken.

These are just some of the gimmicks that Melwani has used to make shopping more than just shopping. Some of the clothes racks look like trains and houses while the sliced-off front part of a car has been converted into a changing room.

The Melwani method of making people part with their money is to tickle their senses and dazzle with excess. The second floor of the sprawling store is due to open soon. The sheer size of the place has prompted the family to seek an entry in the *Guinness Book of Records*.

The verdict of one teenage shopper, an Indian girl living in the US, was unambiguous: "Big Kids Kemp is like nothing I have ever seen before. It beats Macy's and Bloomingdale's any day."

—C.B. YESHVANTH KUMAR

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We see 6 Tempo-Travellers in this picture.

Some people see the Tempo-Traveller as an airline coach.

Some find it perfect for tours and travel.

Others think it's ideal for 5-star hotels.

Senior executives want it to get to work comfortably.

Hospitals value the intensive-care features of its ambulance version.

Many find it an ideal personal vehicle.

In all, 6 distinct Tempo-Travellers.

In design, engineering and comfort, the Tempo-Traveller is identical to the Mercedes Transporter, currently manufactured by Mercedes-Benz AG, West Germany.

And its OM 616 diesel engine makes it economical to run and maintain.

Add to all this a plush, luxurious interior.

See it for yourself. You'll probably discover the seventh Tempo-Traveller.

The Tempo-Traveller.
Made in collaboration with
Mercedes-Benz AG, West Germany.

BAJAJ Tempo LTD.

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THE MARKETS

A New Low

Downward swing continues

A severe bull hammering last fortnight pushed the stock-markets to an all-time low, with the Bombay Stock Exchange (BSE) 30-share sensitive index having bottomed out at a level below the 1,200-mark—having lost well over 100 points in one week—a level that at one stage many felt it would never touch. But then those were the days when even 1,600 points on the index seemed beatable.

Needless to say the investor confidence has been severely rattled; on the one hand there is more than a real threat of war in the Gulf with the US having got world support for a military offensive against Iraq if need be, and at home the continued uncertainty and instability—both political and economic—is not doing much to help a worsening situation.

A significant feature during most of the last fortnight was the very cautious approach of the stock-market giants—the mighty mutual funds and the financial institutions. Not long ago it was these institutions that led the market, to what many felt, unrealistic heights. Now their less than wholehearted support during most of the bear hammering has led many market operators to consider substantial short selling of scrips, taking the view that the response of the major players will be tepid at best. Towards the later part of the fortnight there was marginal recovery, with some of the institutions, notably the Unit Trust of India, lending some amount of support to an otherwise flagging market.

In the midst of this gloom, the only excitement was when the Tata Chemical, Darbari Seth's flagship company, scrip flared up from Rs 77.50 to Rs 95 (spot delivery). Tata Chemicals came into the market to raise debentures worth Rs 400 crore. Tata Steel moved up marginally from Rs 177.50 to Rs 185, but closed lower on selling pressure. On the downside, Associated Cement Companies crashed through the Rs 2,000-level to close the session at Rs 1,860. Reliance was the other loser having closed a shade under Rs 170—the scrip at one stage touched Rs 163 because of lack of support.

It is clear that the market is in a downturn, and there is little indication that things are going to look up in a hurry. Inflation is already beginning to show, and most financial analysts feel the corporate results are also going to sour. Despite various attempts to soft-pedal the issue, the world economy appears to be heading south, in the direction of a recession. For India, this is bad news: with our foreign exchange reserves down to three weeks imports, the last thing we need is trouble on our exports front. The Government has put a freeze on all imports by the public sector, and it will not be long before this diktat is applied to the private sector, but is this yet another case of too little too late?

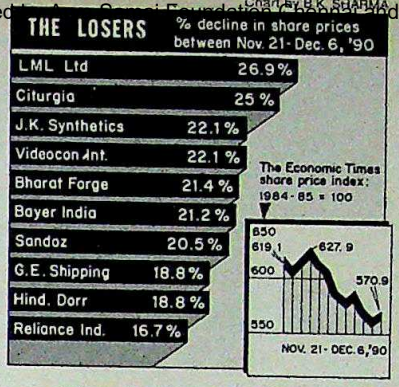


Chart by B.K. SHARMA

ACTIVE STOCKS

	1990 HIGH	1990 LOW	CLOSE 6.12.90	Change in Fortnight	
Ashok Leyland	143.75	69.50	104.00	26.00	–
Associated Cement	2625.00	325.00	1890.00	260.00	–
Asian Paints	305.00	207.50	233.75	8.75	+
Atlas Copco	68.00	32.50	51.00	3.00	–
Bajaj Auto	770.00	355.00	612.50	10.00	–
Baroda Rayon	1925.00	460.00	500.00	160.00	–
Bata India	107.00	62.50	82.50	12.50	–
Ballarpur	325.00	120.00	250.00	16.00	–
Birla Jute	240.00	50.50	181.00	19.00	–
Blow Plast	140.00	34.50	75.00	10.00	–
Bombay Dyeing	445.00	155.00	170.00	nil	
Britannia Ind.	167.00	97.00	122.00	18.00	–
Brooke Bond	175.00	91.00	122.00	4.00	–
Century Textiles	4850.00	2420.00	3900.00	450.00	–
Colgate Palmolive	360.00	176.25	280.00	3.75	–
Cyanamid	150.00	87.50	100.00	15.00	–
DCM	385.00	45.50	230.00	62.00	–
Dunlop	93.00	51.75	57.00	9.00	–
E.I. Hotels	65.25	50.00	55.00	3.00	–
Escorts	200.00	77.75	136.00	21.00	–
Finolex Cables	410.00	200.00	215.00	25.00	–
Garware Nylon	71.00	45.00	47.00	5.50	–
G.E. Shipping	54.75	27.00	28.00	6.50	–
G.S.F.C.	275.00	155.00	210.00	22.50	+
Grasim Ind.	277.50	106.00	205.00	5.00	+
Hind. Aluminium	417.50	205.00	240.00	40.00	–
Hind. Ciba	1900.00	960.00	1150.00	50.00	–
Hind. Cocoa	192.50	133.75	141.25	3.75	–
Hindustan Lever	172.50	101.00	140.00	1.25	+
Hindustan Motors	58.50	19.80	26.25	5.00	–
Hoechst	3400.00	1295.00	2500.00	200.00	–
ICI India Ltd.	72.00	34.00	37.00	10.00	–
Indian Organic	91.25	46.50	51.00	2.75	–
Indian Rayon	175.00	84.00	115.00	nil	
Indrol	320.00	161.25	213.75	18.75	–
Ingersoll-Rand	305.00	190.00	270.00	10.00	–
ITC	182.00	48.75	133.00	13.00	–
J.K. Synthetics	90.00	37.50	40.50	11.50	–
Kinetic Engineering	255.00	130.00	170.00	30.00	–
Kirloskar Cummins	125.00	65.00	108.75	3.75	–
KSB Pumps	260.00	175.00	200.00	20.00	–
Larsen & Toubro	180.00	57.00	130.00	3.75	+
Lipton	112.00	65.00	66.25	3.75	–
LML Ltd.	83.75	15.00	38.00	14.00	–
Madura Coats	285.00	100.50	217.00	25.00	–
M&M	130.00	60.00	75.00	15.00	–
Milk Food	280.00	115.00	140.00	25.00	–
Motor Industries	1400.00	670.00	710.00	90.00	–
Mukand Ltd.	275.00	127.00	165.00	35.00	–
National Organic	1900.00	950.00	1050.00	75.00	–
Nestle India	172.50	101.75	128.00	9.00	–
Nirlon	42.50	13.00	22.00	5.00	–
Orkay Silk Mills	61.00	14.50	28.50	5.00	–
Pelco Electronics	78.00	24.00	60.00	6.00	–
Premier Auto	83.00	42.00	45.00	6.00	–
Raymond	175.00	70.00	132.50	7.50	+
Reckitt & Colman	270.00	178.00	224.00	18.00	–
Reliance Industries	245.00	50.00	172.00	34.50	–
Siemens India	162.50	96.00	125.00	1.25	–
Shaw Wallace	122.00	65.00	77.00	16.00	–
Shriram Fibres	74.00	43.00	44.00	13.00	–
SKF Bearings	2775.00	1240.00	2325.00	125.00	–
SPIC	81.00	44.00	44.50	9.50	–
Tata Steel	275.00	103.25	175.50	10.50	–
Telco	272.50	110.00	210.00	17.50	–
Titan Watches	110.00	31.00	75.00	8.75	–
Vam Organic	205.00	115.00	130.00	25.00	–
Videocon Int.	600.00	105.00	335.00	95.00	–
Voltas	145.00	63.00	105.00	5.00	–
Wimco	52.50	15.75	25.50	0.50	–

WORLD VALUE OF RUPEE

COUNTRY	CURRENCY	UNIT	TT Selling Rates Rs	TT Buying Rates Rs
Australia	Dollar	1	14.1257	13.9738
Austria	Shilling	100	171.8324	170.2113
Bahrain	Dinar	1	N/A	N/A
Bangladesh	Taka	100	57.8252	56.3825
Canada	Dollar	1	15.6593	15.5043
Denmark	Kroner	1	3.1620	3.1305
Egypt	Pound	1	6.6236	6.4437
France	Franc	1	3.6430	3.5524
Hong Kong	Dollar	1	2.3348	2.3124
Indonesia	Rupiah	100	0.9689	0.9546
Iran	Rial	100	N/A	N/A
Italy	Lira	100	1.6191	1.5981
Japan	Yen	100	13.8504	13.5135
Kenya	Shilling	1	0.7989	0.7845
Malaysia	Dollar	1	6.7488	6.6824
Mauritius	Rupee	1	1.3011	1.2661
Nepal	Rupee	1	0.6358	0.6276
Netherlands	Guilder	1	10.7609	10.6527
Pakistan	Rupee	1	0.8592	0.8471
Singapore	Dollar	1	10.5993	10.4928
Spain	Peseta	1	0.1910	0.1882
Sri Lanka	Rupee	1	0.4542	0.4488
Sweden	Kroner	1	3.2417	3.2092
Switzerland	Franc	1	14.2193	14.0736
Tanzania	Shilling	1	0.0959	0.0925
Thailand	Baht	100	73.4473	71.5968
UK	Pound	1	35.1432	34.8857
USA	Dollar	1	18.2149	18.0424
UAE	Dirham	1	N/A	N/A
USSR	Rouble	1	N/A	N/A
Germany	Deutschmark	1	12.3305	12.0192

These rates were supplied by The Bank of Tokyo Limited, New Delhi and quoted between the banks on 5.12.90.

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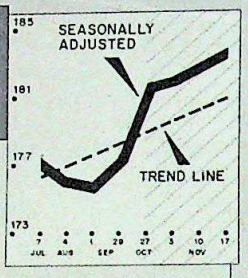
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The economy was lagging behind on all economic fronts last fortnight. Inflation continues to be a major problem, the balance of payments position has been worsened by the Gulf crisis and industrial production is stagnant. Growth in money supply needs to be curtailed.

All data are seasonally adjusted. Current trends are computed on the basis of six months' (weekly data) or one-and-a-half years' (monthly data) figures.

Wholesale Price Index

1981-82 = 100

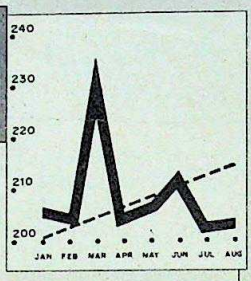


Current Trend
7.1% p.a.

Wholesale prices continue their steady climb. Drastic measures are called for if double digit inflation is to be avoided.

Industrial Production Index

1980-81 = 100

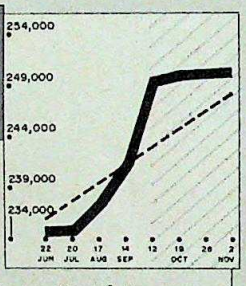


Current Trend
11.5% p.a.

Industrial production grew slightly—the current trend rate of growth is respectable but not enough.

Money Supply

Rs Crore

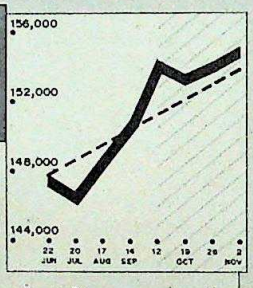


Current Trend
13.8% p.a.

Money supply continued to grow—though the current trend rate of growth is slightly above optimal.

Commercial Bank Credit

Rs Crore

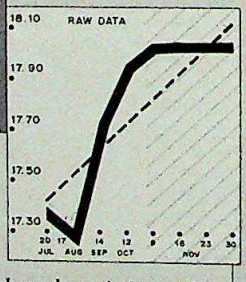


Current Trend
11.2% p.a.

Commercial bank credit was up marginally. But industry needs a greater infusion of credit.

Foreign Exchange Rate

Rs per US$

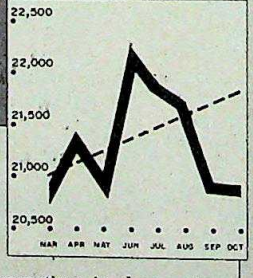


Current Trend
10.8% p.a.

The rupee has been depreciating against the US dollar. Rising imports will neutralise any increase in exports.

Electricity Generation

Million kWh

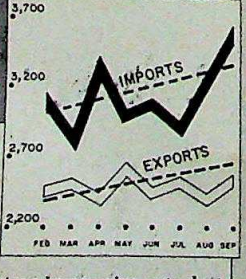


Current Trend
6.5% p.a.

Electricity generation is down since August. This is certainly not going to help industry in any way!

Foreign Trade

Rs Crore

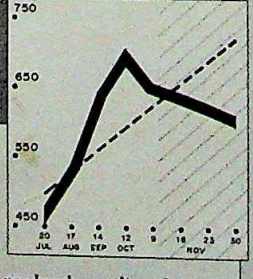


Current Trend
19.6%p.a.
EXPORTS
20.7%p.a.
IMPORTS

Exports grew at an impressive rate, but imports of oil exacerbated the current account deficit further.

Share Price Index

1984-85 = 100



Current Trend
102.9% p.a.

Share prices are slowly settling down—nevertheless there are no signs of an imminent crash.

WHOLESALE PRICES

Growth of items in the 1st fortnight of November 1990

	% Growth
Betel-Nuts	9.30
Aviation Spirit	8.84
Gur	8.22
Chillies	7.89
Groundnut Seeds	7.66
Fish	7.14
Urad	6.61
Polythene Moulding Powder	5.70
PVC Compounds	4.98
Gingelly Seed	4.92
Solvent Extracted Oil	4.19
Jowar	3.81
Cotton Raw	3.78
Radio & T.V.	3.77
Turmeric	3.68
Cotton Seeds	3.47
Atta	3.30
Tobacco Raw	3.20
Groundnut Oil	2.86
Arhar	2.83
Groundnut Oilcake	2.65
Cars	2.41
Tapioca	2.21
Silk & Artificial Fabrics	2.19
Art Silk & Artificial Fabrics	2.05
Maida	2.02
Rice	1.98
Linseed Oil	1.80
Handloom & Powerloom Products	1.65
Mustard Oilcake	1.56
Bajra	1.48
Ragi	1.47
Silk Raw	1.46
Logs/Timber/Bamboo	1.42
Mustard Oil	1.42
Cotton Cloth	1.39
Coffee	1.25
Rape & Mustard Seeds	1.25
Tea	1.23
Internal Combustion Engines	1.12
Coal	1.11
Synthetic Fibres	1.10
Board	1.02
Milk	1.01
Nylon/Terene and Mixedcloth	0.98
Machine Tools	0.96
Cigarettes	0.89

Of the 134 series considered, 92 of them with a total weight of 66.915 had a positive rate of growth and 42 of them with a total weight of 17.937 had a negative rate of growth.

SELECTED INDICATORS

	1990	1989
Petroleum Crude Thousand Tonnes, October	2558	2871
Petroleum Refinery Product Thousand Tonnes, October	3789	3956
Letters of Intent Numbers, October	800	1033
Industrial Licences Numbers, October	300	347
Call Money Rate Per cent, October	2506.25	1201.75

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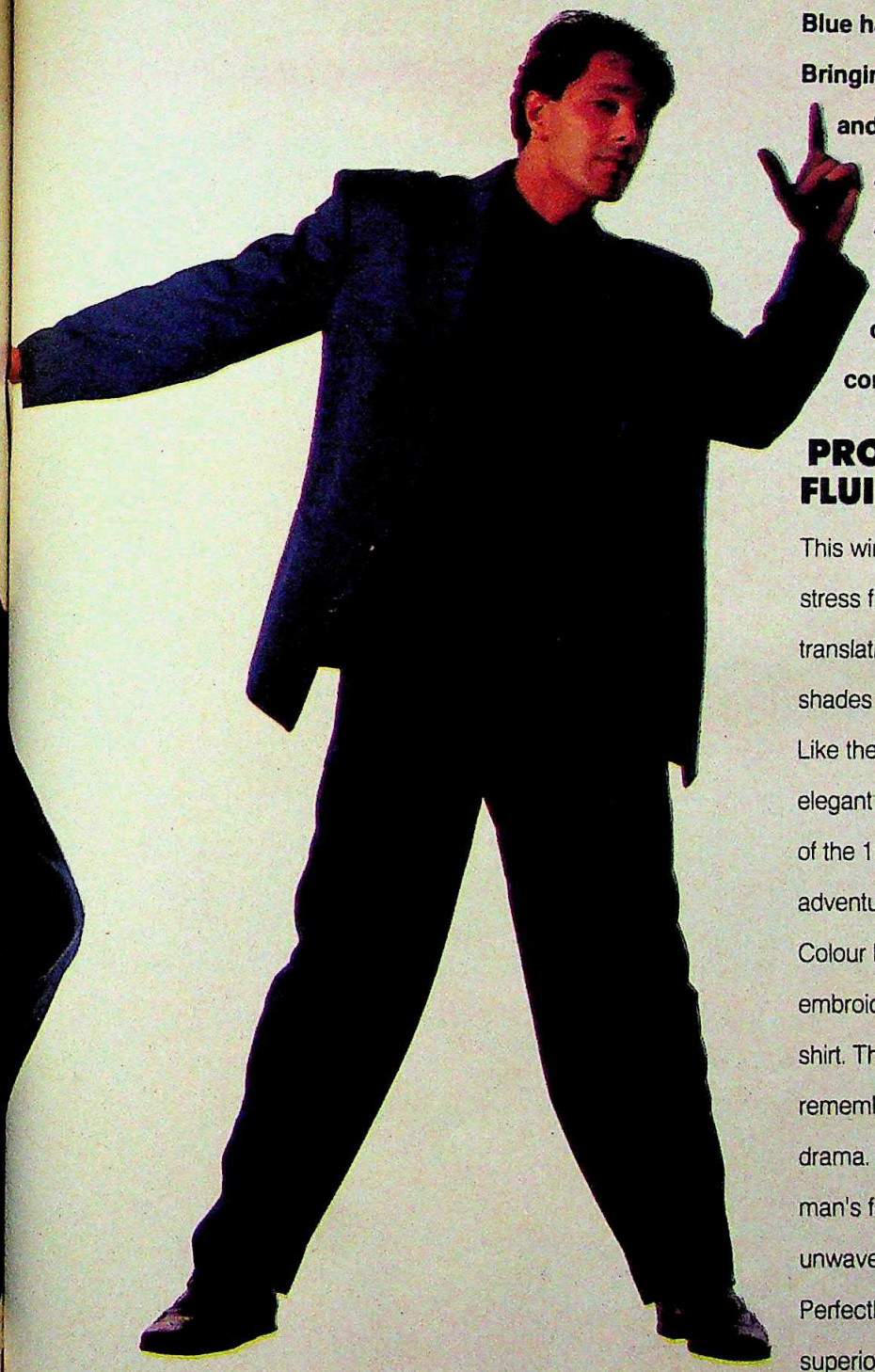
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PARTY SPOKESPERSONS

Talking Tall

Speaking to the press is no more the job of the sidelined legislator but veteran politicians who spend much time thinking of quotes for the newspapers.

By BHASKAR ROY

THEY are no longer cynically called the 5 o'clock follies. With the media becoming more and more demanding, the evening press briefings by various political parties, earlier characterised by insipid monologues by insignificant partymen, are gaining in importance. So much so that these tete-e-tetes at twilight are getting much newspaper space. The major parties have told their spokesmen to make briefiings as interesting and informative as possible. Communication with the public, the politicians seem to have realised, is not just a question of throwing a few barbs at opponents, responding to a reporter's insistent query or blandly reacting to an event. It's much more. And so, these days, briefings are being handled adroitly by those who have some experience at skirting uncomfortable questions, a ready wit and a macroscopic overview of political developments.

Everyone's in the fray, from senior journalists who have seen governments fall like packs of cards to occasionally self-righteous greenhorns who haven't lost their milk teeth. Says Janata Dal(S) spokesperson S.P. Malviya: "Earlier only experienced journalists would toss questions at us. Now even raw recruits subject me to grilling."

Being a party spokesperson is not a flippant matter, demanding as it does a clear head, the hide of a rhino, and willing subjection to the new, less benign, laws of political existence. Even the Congress(I), for the first time in its long and chequered history, has had to appoint an "official spokesman", taking the cue from the British Labour Party which created this post after going into opposition in 1951. V.N. Gadgil is the first party spokesperson who does not hold the general secretary's post. And Petroleum Minister, S.P. Malviya always finds time for the daily round of exchanging flak.

The men of the evening hour readily admit that theirs is an onerous task, this daily confrontation with scribes. Earlier, only a major political development would enthuse correspondents to troop lazily to the party offices. At the 24, Akbar Road AICC(I) headquarters during those heady days of 1987 when the party was being buffeted by V.P. Singh's revolt, there was no regular briefing. The Congress(I) found its new role of being sharply watched by newspersons uncomfortable and found no reason to aggravate the discomfort by daily powwows.

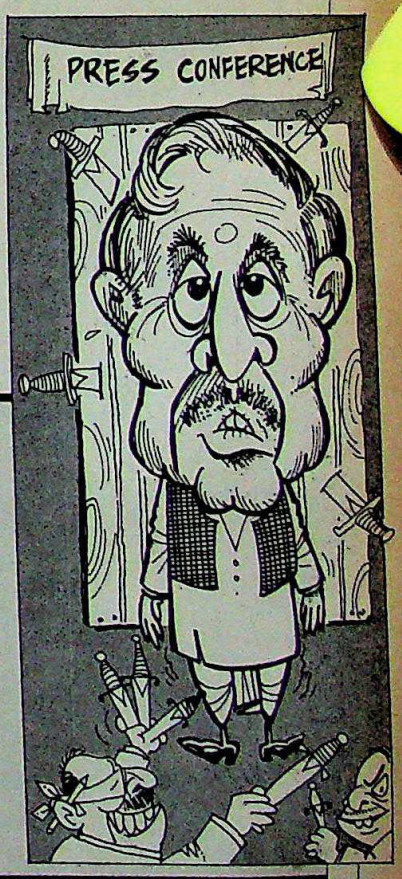
But the current media boom—which has ushered in an age of edgy competitiveness for news—and the advent of video newsmagazines, have lent an air of seriousness to the evening briefings. Laments Murli Manohar Joshi, BJP general secretary who briefs the press on most important occasions: "It is no longer possible to get away with a faux pas. You are trapped on celluloid."

A seasoned journalist recognises the differences between various spokespersons and handles them with varying degrees of geniality, or otherwise. Each spokesperson has his own distinctive style and his own way of going about the job. It is difficult

Cartoons by JAYANTO



"The press is not at all hostile towards us. On the other hand it is very cooperative."
V.N. GADGIL



"It is no longer possible to get away with a faux pas. You're trapped on celluloid."
MURLI MANOHAR JOSHI

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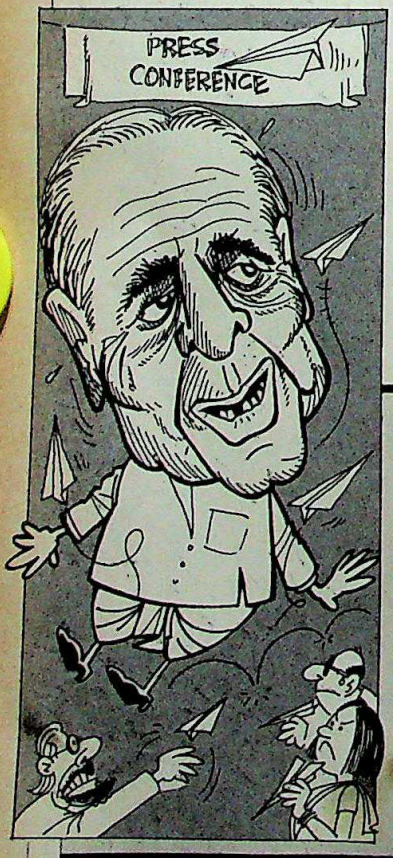
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to believe, for instance, that the soft-spoken and diminutive Gadgil can actually go on the offensive and demolish opponents. But he regularly continues to prove that he can snipe without being nasty. What has made him stand apart from the crowd is his sharp wit and his subtle sense of humour. After the withdrawal of the BJP's support to the National Front government, he remarked: "From the intensive care unit, the patient has been shifted to the terminal ward."

Sometimes, he gives in to plagiarising phrases, but with due contextual changes. In his memoirs, for instance, well-known BBC commentator Robin Day, wrote that after his heart attack he was like a passenger in the departure lounge whose flight had fortunately been delayed. Gadgil used the metphor to devastating effect during the recent political crisis: "The Government is in the departure lounge and the flight will not be delayed on November 7" (the day the V.P. Singh government lost the confidence motion in Parliament).

Gadgil's caustic humour is the result of his "British training" during his years in London. He is an avid observer of the Westminster scene. But what he doesn't seem to have absorbed from the British is a stiff upper lip and often takes a dip into droll, if titillating, metaphors. Commenting on V.P. Singh's sudden broadsides against the BJP during the final count-down for his government's collapse, the suave Pune wordmeister said: "After living in sin for 11 months, he is claiming that he is a virgin." Still, you cannot fault Gadgil for being loud or crude.

Janata Dal spokesperson Jaipal Reddy is Gadgil's polar opposite. He had his political initiation as president of the Osmania University's students' union, and moved to national politics after four successive terms in the Andhra Pradesh Assembly. He is as boisterous as Gadgil is low-key and his lexicon is peppered with flamboyance. His expressions are colourful and alliterative rather than witty.



During the St Kitts forgery controversy, he nimbly traced Rajiv Gandhi's evolution from "Mr Clean to McClean" (managing director of the defunct bank on the Caribbean island). He enumerated the "four stages of the Congress(I) somersault" on the Mandal Commission report thus: "From initial approbation to ambiguity to ambivalence to final antagonism." For him, the Janata Dal(S) formed by the breakaway Chandra Shekhar faction, is for all practical purposes Janata Dal (Rajiv). It is a party of "disrupters, defectors and deserters".

"In the midst of briefings I often feel I am being examined by seasoned lawyers."
S.P. MALVIYA

"For this job, one needs the rare ability to conceptualise and articulate with precision."
JAIPAL REDDY



With his love of verbal pyrotechnics, Reddy seems to be enjoying his assignment. He recalls with a wry smile Devi Lal's argument during the Dal presidential election that he should not be in the contest 'because Jaipal Reddy has no replacement as the party spokesman'. He says that the job of his Congress(I) and BJP counterparts is a great deal easier—one being a "monolithic party, only one viewpoint is to be taken care of", and the other, being a "disciplined party, only a given party line has to be articulated".

IN this context, he refers to the tightrope walk he had to perform on the Meham issue: "Though we could not take an official stand, I had to keep the party at a distance from Chautala." Terming the Meham imbroglio as the most difficult situation he has had to face as the Janata Dal spokesperson, he now feels that after the split, his task has become less sweaty and exhausting: "My job has become simple and, therefore, crude."

A spokesperson, Reddy feels, has to be a "professional politician"; in the sense that he himself has "no other vocation". He strongly speaks against the "recent tendency to hire experts". This is obviously an oblique, and not particularly kind, reference to former newspaper editor M.J. Akbar's appointment as assistant to Gadgil. Says Reddy: "For this job, one needs to have the ability to conceptualise and articulate with precision. This cannot be done by a non-political person. He can at best be the spokesman for Pepsi Cola."

This kind of verbal high drama is missing at the 11 Ashoka Road headquarters of the BJP, probably because the party's views are too rigid to lend themselves to individualistic grotesquerie. No newsperson expects either an "inside story" of a crucial party meeting or one leader speaking off-the-record about another. Says BJP spokesperson K.L. Sharma: "We had to toil hard to get into the news. Earlier, only Advani

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Vajpayee got the coverage; other leaders were not taken ously by the press."

Things changed for the better only after the party did a y of "press psychology". "Now we give newsworthy douts which evoke positive responses," says Sharma. y are undeniably rabble-rousing. The party's views on jab and the Kashmir Valley ("Terrorist camps in occupied hmir must be strafed") make instant headlines.

UT the BJP too has its twilight man to enliven briefings when they get too dull. Murli Manohar Joshi, who is usually busy with organisational work in the states, bobs n the party's newly-upholstered press room in the wake of political developments. As the results of the last general tion were coming in bringing spectacular success for the he was asked whether it would 'prick' their conscience to port V. P. Singh who had refused to share the platform with BJP. He answered with equanimity: "In politics one has to ready for both pins and pricks." One of his claims to oriety is that he taught V.P. Singh at Allahabad University. hi laughs away allegations that his former pupil had gone ay. "I taught him physics, not politics. *Phir bhi, sau me se ek aadh nikal hi aata hai* (Out of a hundred, one or two do n out thus)."

Malviya, a close associate of Charan Singh, is an old hand his job. He makes sure that the smile remains on his face wever barbed the questions are. The day the Janata Dal(S) e papers in reply to the Lok Sabha Speaker's notice on floor- ssing from the parent party, a reporter asked if he was oing to rope in some more Janata Dal MPs. With a little twist assumed a patronising air: "If they come on their own they most welcome. If the entire party wants to merge we do not e any objection." Malviya displays a remarkable humility his relations with the press: " I am more afraid of the pen n the sword. With the sword you can finish an individual with the pen the entire government."

Handling newshounds is no easy job, and each party kesperson has to do his homework rigorously. "I think of lines while taking my morning walk," Gadgil says in an usually confessional mood. Reddy formulates his strategy the day immediately after reading the morning papers. The m BJP, however, allows no individualism. Senior party ctionaries like J.P. Mathur, K.R. Malkani, Jay Dubashi, arma and Joshi hunker down together to prepare the brief the spokesperson. They even decide who will brief the ss. Despite periodic grouchings about the bias of the press m all political quarters, these spokespersons have had very le experience of being misquoted. "We are being fairly orted," says Sharma. Gadgil thinks that the "press is not tile at all. It is rather very cooperative". As speculation was ring regarding the possibility of the Congress(I) participa- n in government, Gadgil ended his evening briefing with a e-line statement that Rajiv Gandhi would apprise President nkataraman of the party stand on government formation. is evoked a barrage of questions. Gadgil sat smilingly and d: "I have made a statement and you are free to draw your erences." The uncharacteristic bluntness surprised many. e next day he explained: "If I answered your questions there is a risk of prejudicing the President's decision."

Some spokespersons even enjoy their evening rendezvous. ys Malviya: "In the midst of the briefing, I often feel that I am the witness box being cross-examined by seasoned lawyers. ell myself that my replies have to be very proper."

Now, with the current political instability and sensitive ues like Ram Janmabhoomi on the agenda, the 5 p.m. tight- e walk for party spokesmen has become even more tricky.

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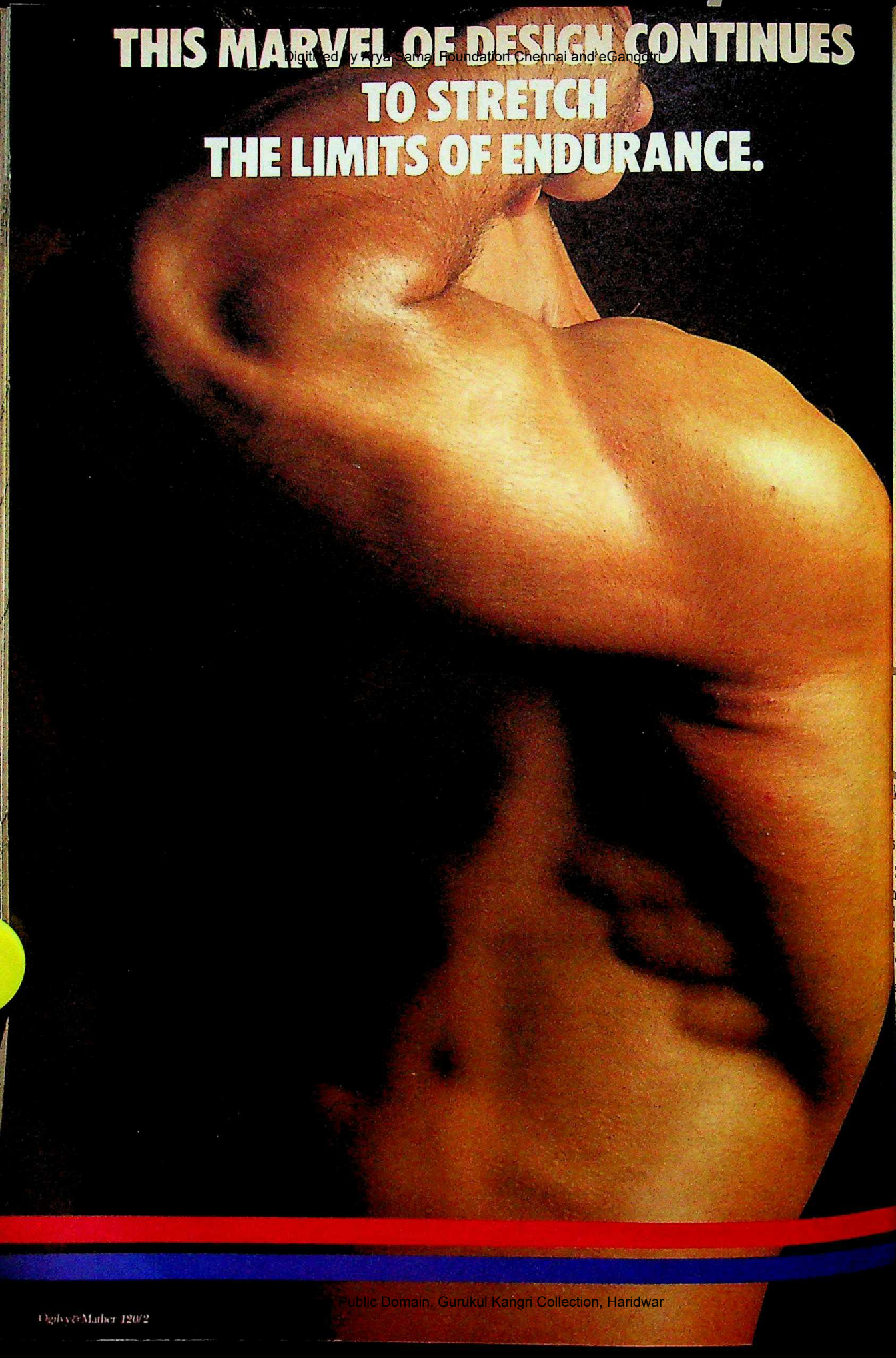
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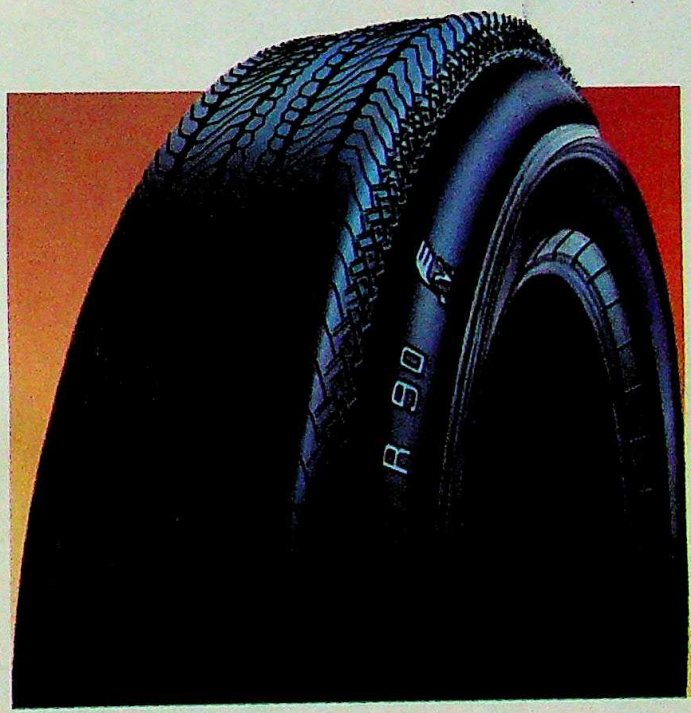
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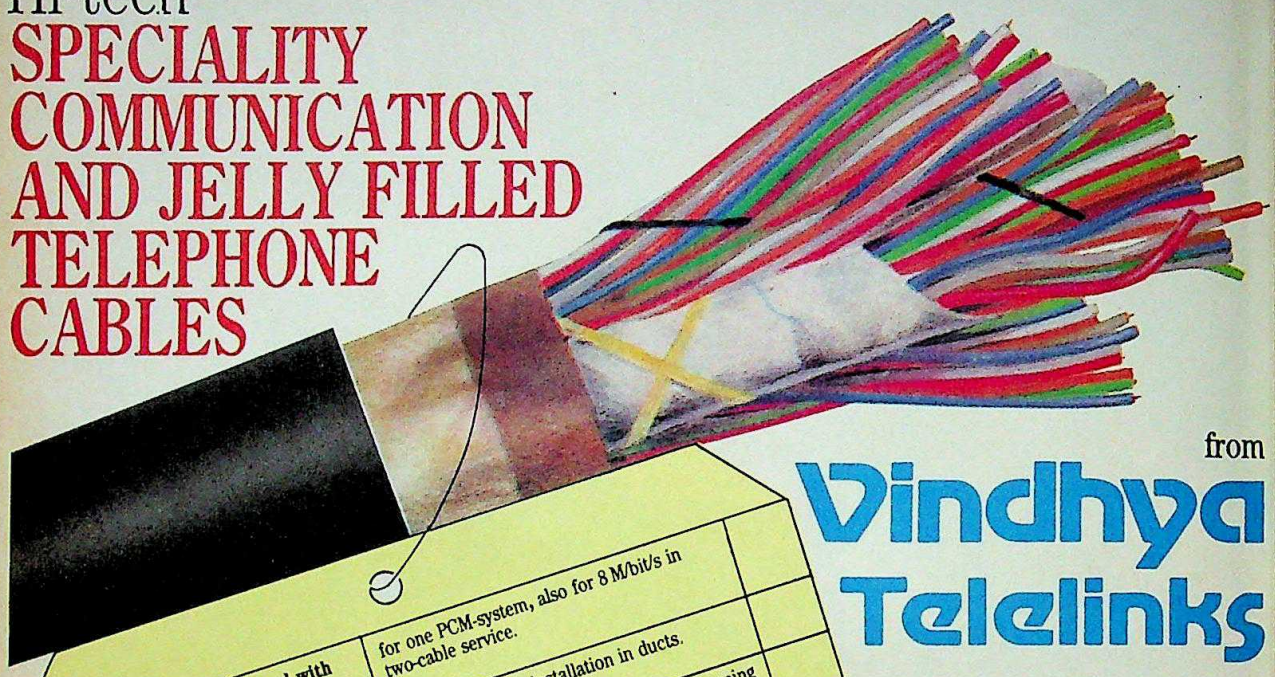
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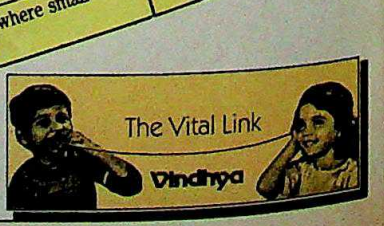
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BANGLADESH

Fear after Freedom

Democracy gets a chance, but uncertainty reigns

AFTER the ecstasy of liberation from autocratic rule, the people of Bangladesh are now tasting the agony of slowly and painstakingly rebuilding democracy. Like their fellow sufferers in Eastern Europe, they know it's going to be an arduous task.

Nine long years of General Hussain Muhammad Ershad's rule have left them with a deep sense of foreboding about the future, celebrations notwithstanding.

Most people are keeping their fingers crossed until the promised elections are held in three months' time. The new Acting President, Shahabuddin Ahmed, has made all the right noises, notably asking the Opposition to help him organise free and fair elections. But Ahmed is a relatively unknown quantity. As a former chief justice of the Supreme Court, his ability to keep control over a rather volatile situation is in question.

Army Chief Lt-General Nuruddin Khan has also made plenty of democracy-loving remarks. Waxing almost lyrical, he told a television interviewer that the winds of change which had earlier swept through Eastern Europe had finally reached Bangladesh. The army, he declared, was proud to be on the side of the people.

While the reluctance of the army to prop up Ershad resulted in his removal and subsequent arrest, it was obvious that the army saw which way the wind was blowing. As an Awami League leader, Bajlur Rahman Tuni, said: "What we witnessed here was a Philippines-like situation where ordinary people were prepared to face tanks if necessary."

History has made the Bangladeshis wary about what the future holds. On two previous occasions when army generals seized power—in 1975 and 1982—they did so after allowing a brief period of civilian rule. In Zia-ur-Rahman's case, he managed to restrain himself for 80 days before declaring himself president. General Ershad let democracy live a little longer before delivering the *coup de grace*.

The ability of the Opposition to steer the country through the difficult transition period which lies ahead is also in doubt. The evidence to date is not too inspiring. The two leading begums are barely on speaking terms. Sheikh Hasina Wajed and Khaleda Zia, who respectively head an eight-party alliance and a seven-party alliance, only met for the first time in nine years as recently as December 6. The occasion was an address by Shahabuddin Ahmed to political leaders at Bangla Bhavan in Dhaka. The two women smiled at each other but didn't speak. The students in the vanguard of the pro-democracy riots had run out of patience with the incessant bickering which had characterised the student movements of both parties. A student leader in Dhaka explained: "This time we decided to leave them aside and forged a united front of our own."

In the forthcoming elections, Hasina has an advantage over Khaleda in that her party has an impressive apparatus at grassroots level whereas the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) has few leaders and even less of an organisation. Said an Awami League activist sniffily: "The BNP would be hard put to field even a hundred candidates for Parliament."

During the euphoria following Ershad's eventual decision to resign, there was much personal vilification of the man. By December 8, Dhaka University—where the death-knell of the regime was sounded—was the centre of the celebrations as thousands of students danced in joy and poured abuse on the ousted leader. "*Hoi hoi roi roi. Ershad sala gelo koi*" (Hey hey, where has the bastard Ershad gone) was a frequent refrain.

Long-suppressed accusations of corruption flourished in the aftermath of Ershad's fall. Following the pattern of deposed leaders in Eastern Europe, stories about Ershad's accumulated wealth and cash stashed away in foreign bank accounts spread like wildfire. It didn't matter much if they were true. They confirmed popular conviction. One prominent Bangladeshi, who doesn't want to be named, remarked: "I don't have any evidence but I've heard that for any contract worth over 1 crore taka, permission from Ershad's wife, Raushan, was needed."

The next rumour doing the rounds was that Ershad was preparing to flee the country. An angry crowd

Rejoicing in Dhaka after Ershad quit

UNI/AFP



The Opposition's ability to steer the country through the difficult transition period which lies ahead is in serious doubt.

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AP/PTI

Khaleda, Shahabuddin and Hasina

numbering several thousand quickly laid siege to Zia International Airport. The deposed President has, in fact, been in hiding since Ahmed's swearing-in ceremony on December 4.

Faced with such an outburst of popular fury, Ershad's associates have opted for a low profile. But they deny the charges of corruption. "Let them prove their accusations in a court of law," challenged an official of Ershad's Jaatiya Party. "The opposition parties say they want a free and fair poll but they've started witch-hunting on a massive scale." This was a reference to the publication of lists of alleged collaborators which appeared in Dhaka.

THE venom was sometimes misdirected against people with only a tenuous connection with Ershad. One Supreme Court judge, Debesh Bhattacharjee, found himself the target of abuse as he was known to have given Ershad a lift in his helicopter.

The bitterness of the attacks is an inevitable result of the years of enforced silence. Like the discredited communists of the Eastern Bloc, Ershad may have hoped for a little gratitude for providing 'stability' at least in place of freedom. But all he and the other deposed leaders have received is bitterness for what are seen as the wasted years. With only 19 years of independence behind them, Bangladeshis wanted rapid progress. What they got was stagnation.

The Awami League has a devastating litany of complaints. In 1971—the year of independence—landless peasants formed 35 per cent of the population. The League says the figure has doubled. Literacy stood at 24 per cent two decades ago but has fallen to 17 per cent. And the fact that 86 per cent of the country's income comes from foreign donations is a matter of shame.

Bangladeshis are hoping that their future will be brighter once free elections have been held. But they're dealing with the dawn of a new political era in a spirit of cautious optimism. "We have another opportunity to build democracy in our country," said former foreign minister Aneesul Islam Mahmood. "The question is, will we succeed this time or will we bungle it?"

—UTTAM SENGUPTA in Dhaka, with AMRIT DHILLON

H.M. ERSHAD

"I have the right to fight an election"

THE whereabouts of former President, H.M. Ershad, are such a closely-guarded secret that even his party MPs are unaware of where he is staying. But contact was finally established, after hours of search, and Ershad agreed to speak to UTTAM SENGUPTA *over the telephone. Excerpts:*

RAGHU RAI



Q. *What have you been doing since stepping down?*

A. (*Laughs*) I think I have been taking some well-deserved rest after a long time. I am catching up on films on the video and this morning tried writing a poem but gave up. I think I will try again and complete it.

Q. *Did you anticipate that you would have to step down?*

A. I was busy and had been spending a lot of time abroad. Perhaps I did fail to judge the situation.

Q. *Why did you finally give up? Because the army refused to help?*

A. Things moved fast and the law and order situation was getting out of hand. People were getting killed and property being destroyed. I didn't want a bloody confrontation.

Q. *How do you react to the corruption charges against you?*

A. What is the use of replying to them? There are laws and law courts. Let them take their course.

Q. *Is there any possibility of the army taking over power once again?*

A. All that I'll say is that I cannot be held responsible. I had promised when I took over that so long as I was in power there'd be no martial law in Bangladesh again. I'm glad I've been able to keep my promise.

Q. *Are you planning to contest the election?*

A. I believe I have the democratic right in a democracy to fight an election and go to the people. And we do have a political party. So why not?

Q. *Do you think you can come back to power?*

A. No comments.

Q. *Are you apprehensive of your personal security?*

A. No, I am fine.

Q. *How would you evaluate your tenure?*

A. Let others do it. My countrymen will judge.

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COMPUTER ART

A Brush with Chips

Top painters create unique acrylic paintings on computers



A swathe of luminous colour sweeps across the screen. The outline of a face emerges, and is as quickly erased. A leaf appears suspended in mid-air, and magically reproduces itself. A bright red pot disintegrates into a million pink particles. Colours, lines and shapes quiver and disappear.

A child playing a new kind of computer game? A graphic designer trying to work out a television title sequence? Neither. Computer graphics software is now being utilised for a different purpose—creating works of art by some of India's best known painters. Two years ago, Abhay Mangaldas, who runs a computer graphics unit, and Sonal Zaveri, an art enthusiast, together initiated a path-breaking computer aided art project. The project immediately fired the imagination of some of India's leading painters such as M.F. Husain, Akbar Padamsee, Raza, Laxman Shreshta, Prabhakar Barve, Navjot, Manjit Bawa and Atul Dodiya.

The computer aided art project, which was conceived and executed over two continents, was kept under wraps until last fortnight when the first canvases arrived from England. What the painters had created on a Macintosh II PC in Bombay was encoded onto diskettes and taken to another computer unit in London, where the image was transferred onto large canvases. The result: 24 unique acrylic paintings which will be unveiled at a major group show, called State of the Art, on January 5. "Computer art on canvas—this has never been done before. Artists in Europe and the US have been using the computer to create works on paper, but what we have done here is something new," says Padamsee, who shuttles between studios in Paris and Bombay.

Said Husain: "Only the computer's graphic potential has been utilised by painters in the West till now. But Indian painters have done something unique—we have used the computer to create actual canvases." The unique art project was born out of boredom. Mangaldas and Prism Graphics owner Ajay Sharma were feeling jaded by run-of-the-mill assignments like designing graphics and setting type for publishers and other commercial clients. They then hit upon the idea of roping in painters to create computer aided art. Zaveri, who was studying computer animation at Prism Graphics, took on the task of persuading artists to join the project. Admits Husain: "In the beginning I just wanted to run away. Gradually, however, as more and more Indian artists overcame their initial hesitation, the unusual project was eventually able to take off.

> *Painters have now before them a formidable array of possibilities and an unimaginable freedom on screen to draw, apply colour, animate, smudge, invert, blend and distort.*

While Mangaldas combined elements from a number of graphic software programmes to create an omnibus hard disc programme for use by the artists, Zaveri pursued the sceptical painters like a mythical muse, making them overcome their loathing for electronic gadgetry and agree to experiment on a computer screen. "I was very suspicious in the beginning. For three days I just sat and watched my wife Sunita (also a painter) work on the computer," recalls Shreshta.

Zaveri sat with them throughout, guiding, cajoling, even calming frayed tempers. Painters normally used to facing a blank canvas with a handful of colours on the palette were now confronted with a formidable array of possibilities—16 million colour shades, 'menu' under half a dozen categories and a 'tool-box' available with 32 basi functions combining to produce a seem ingly infinite number of permutation and combinations.

The artist suddenly had unimagin able freedom while working on th screen—to draw, apply colour, animat the drawing, multiply the image, sca another drawing or painting onto i smudge, distort, invert, blend colour introduce screens, and so on. The po sibilities were endless: to experiment a every stage, store what had already bee done, or even go back to the original the experiments were unsuccessfu

There was also a choice of controls— a pen-like stick on a magnetic boar or an electronic 'mouse' on a rubbe pad. "It was so fascinating, the com puter was like a toy in our hands, an sometimes we accidentally got e fects we hadn't even visualised, observes Navjot.

The project grew in scope even a work was in progress. Zaveri an Mangaldas, who set up a new com pany Brahma to promote comput aided art, at first attracted painte with the promise of creating lo priced, multiple-edition graphic a on paper. But Mangaldas stumble onto a new process developed by a Australian computer engineer an used till now mainly for creatin theatre or shopwindow backdrops— transferring an image from a diskett to a canvas by spraying water-base acrylic inks through computer co trolled jets.

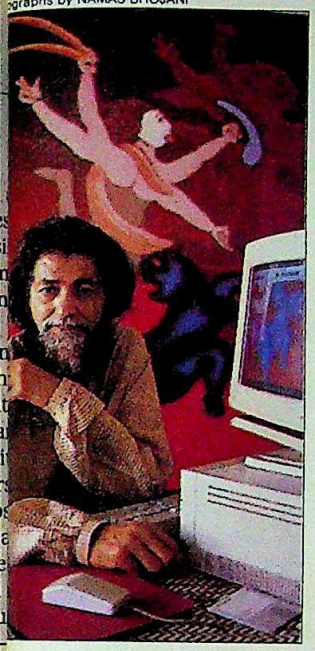
The spray jets contain only the fo primary colours, which combine a cording to the electronically coded dat on the diskette to create a variety colours and shades. The acrylic ink guaranteed not to fade or crack for 10 years, an unprecedented assurance i an art market where complaints ar heard about deteriorating oil paintings The result, as Zaveri describes it: exclu sive electronic canvases.

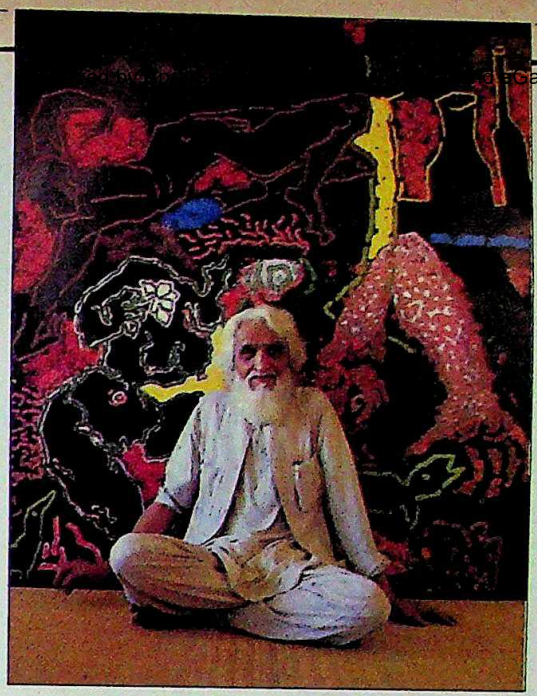
The change in scope, however raised costs and has pushed up price alienating some of the painters initially attracted to the project due to its mas appeal. Computer aided art will sell a

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graphs by NAMAS BHOJANI









(Clockwise from top): Husain; Padamsee; Sonal Zaveri and Abhay Mangaldas; Navjot; Shreshta; and Bawa with their creations: amazing potential





s even higher than what the artists' nal canvases fetch. Moreover, since a pioneering effort, Brahma is also g a much higher commission than 35-per cent usually charged by mercial galleries.

NDOUBTEDLY, what the painters have created with the help of the Macintosh is something extraor-ry. The acrylic canvases may lack ariation in texture typical of tradi-al oil paintings, but the uniformly ed colours create a distinctive, tap-like quality. The basic structure of mputer image consists of pixels, sands of tiny squares which combine to form a picture. Some painters, like Padamsee and Shreshta, have emphasised the pixelish qualities of the image, introducing an abstract element in the nudes and mountainscapes. Others, like Bawa and Dodiya, have used contrasting luminous and dark or flat colours to recreate images reminiscent of their oil canvases. Husain has utilised the computer to let loose a miasma of rich, dark imagery, while Navjot has taken advantage of the facility to reproduce images in her brooding figurative studies. Barve is the only painter who used the computer just to visualise the image, transferring it onto canvas by hand with enamel paint. Of the other painters, some refused to touch the canvas after it was printed except to sign their names, while some worked on it further with a brush.

"It was a fusion of art and technology. Perhaps through this fusion a new art could evolve," says Barve of the computer aided art project. Although some of the painters may have found the experience of working on a computer slightly disorienting at first, all their fears and anxieties are now a thing of the past. They are all excited by the unveiling of the computer's potential as a tool in artistic creation. The electronic 'mouse' may yet nibble its way into the history of art.

—M. RAHMAN

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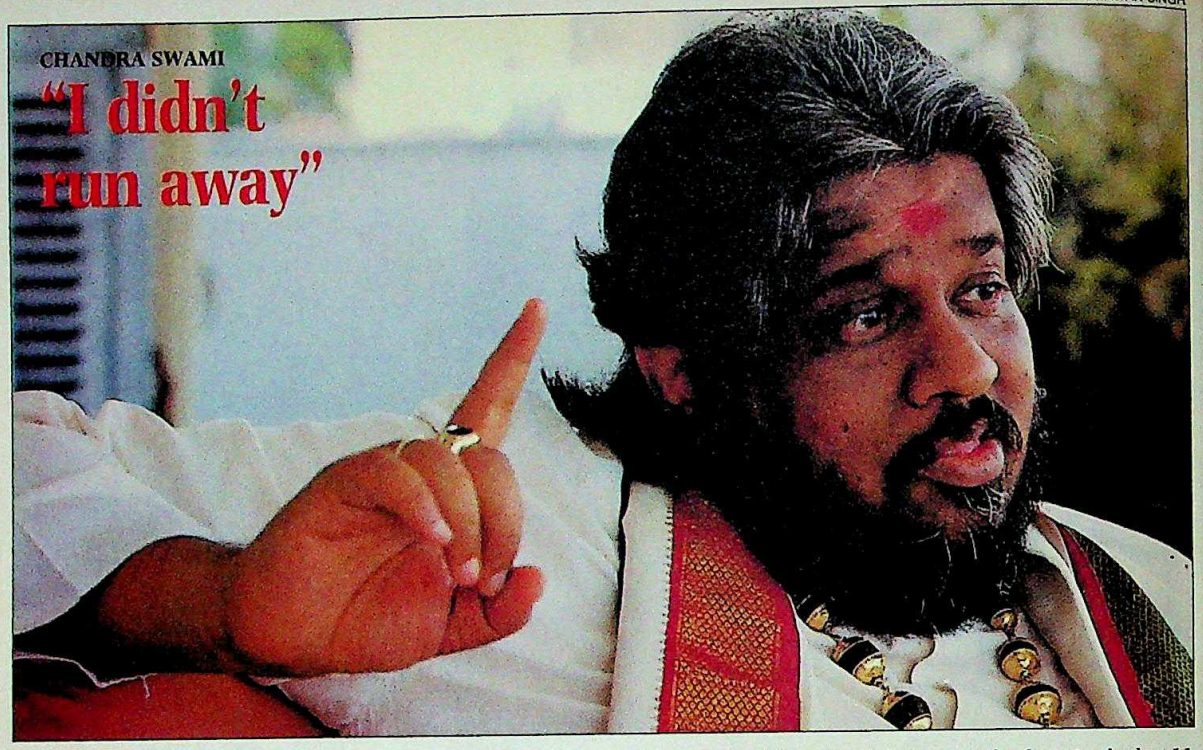
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BHAWAN SINGH



CHANDRA SWAMI

"I didn't run away"

RICH and controversial, the high-flying swamy—Chandra Swami, 41—flies in private jets, cruises in fancy yachts and can boast of having met 130 heads of state. Arms dealers, film stars, politicians, kings, sultans—he claims to be close to all of them. There is no controversy he doesn't have a finger in—arms deals, FERA violations, blackmail, cheating and fraud. And yet, he refuses to be pinned down. He flew abroad when the Rajiv Gandhi government was investigating cases of cheating against him and in turn started investigating the 'secret' foreign accounts of Gandhi and his family. When the pressure increased, he did a volte face and turned his 'spiritual powers' on V.P. Singh and pulled out the St Kitts card. When the V.P. Singh government came to power, Chandra Swami fled the country, fearing arrest. He stayed abroad for all the 11 months that Singh was in power. And was back as soon as friend Chandra Shekhar took over. Despite FERA and forgery cases still pending against him, he has direct access to the prime minister. The bearded, overweight, draped- in-silk swamy met Senior Correspondent HARINDER BAWEJA at his residence in Delhi, soon after his return from Ayodhya. Excerpts:

Q. You fled when V.P. Singh was prime minister, to evade arrest. Are you back now that your friend Chandra Shekhar is in power?

A. I did not run away. I didn't want, even for a minute, to be part of evil. V.P. Singh was prime minister for 11 months and had all the powers and means at his disposal to get me. He could have called me, why didn't he? He had embassies in every country. He had the high court under him. I was abroad with the permission of the high court. Why couldn't he prove that the account does not exist. Chandra Shekhar and I have deep affection for each other. I knew him even earlier.

Q. Do you meet Chandra Shekhar often?

A. Not too often. I meet him when I feel like and when I have the time.

Q. Is it your proximity to Chandra Shekhar that took you to Ayodhya? You tried to create a rift amongst the sants.

A. He did not ask me to go there at all. I had gone there to unite the swamys, not to break them. Saints are never destructive, they always try to unite. Politicians are the ones who play games, for the sake of votes. Ayodhya is a religious problem and its solution can only be through religious bodies.

Q. It is said the cases against you will not be pursued because of your closeness to Chandra Shekhar.

A. I have never spoken to Chandra Shekhar about my cases and neither will he do such a thing. Politics is one thing and friendship another. The cases are in court, how can he end them.

Q. As is happening with the Bofors case?

A. *Kuchhnahi*, why didn't V.P. Singh bring out the facts in the last 11 months. Now that he is out of power, he is yelling, 'Bofors', 'Bofors'.

Q. Why have you been avoiding appearing for your cases?

A. CBI has not given me summons of any kind so far. The Enforcement Directorate summons was there but I could not appear last time because I was not well. Why should I avoid them. In 1988, I spent 120 hours with the enforcement officials for the FERA case and 60 hours with the CBI. All cases against me are born out of political vendetta.

Q. Did you fly to St Kitts in connection with Ajeya Singh's alleged bank account?

A. I have never been there. I challenge them to prove the St Kitts allegations wrong. V.P. Singh's team went there but I know for a fact, that they never approached the bankers. They just roamed around like tourists, did some sightseeing and came back.

Q. But you haven't even been able to substantiate your charge that Singh hired Fairfax to examine the foreign accounts of opposition leaders.

A. Not proved. V.P. Singh should prove it to be otherwise. And let Michael Hershman say that he hasn't met me or not given me the letter signed by V.P. Singh. At the right time I'll show a picture of myself with Hershman and reveal the copy of the letter.

Q. But wasn't the signature faked?

A. For V.P. Singh every thing is a

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lie, except what he himself says. How much truth he speaks the whole world knows. I don't need to give him a certificate.

Q. *You are said to indulge in blackmail. Didn't you lead the Rajiv Gandhi government into believing that Martin Ardbo had told you that Rajiv was involved in Bofors?*

A. Tell me who I have blackmailed. Ardbo never said that Rajiv Gandhi is involved. Yes, I have met him not once but thrice but never did he say that Rajiv was involved. Yes, he said that others of his government were involved but he did not take names.

Q. *Who has taken the money?*

A. Whether I have the knowledge or not, I would not like to say anything.

Q. *You also told Zail Singh that you would give him Rs 40 crore to dislodge Rajiv Gandhi as prime minister.*

A. If you remember he withdrew his statement two days later and since you have met me, you will grant me that much intelligence. I could never have made such a stupid statement. Yes, Sardars can make such statements. But Zail Singh is such a good PR man. How he was made to make such a statement I can't say. But see the person who took the interview. Pritish Nandy behaved with me how he behaves with others.

Q. *What kind of relations do you have with Rajiv ?*

A. *Theek hein.* Can't say we are close but can't say there is no relationship either. I have associations with many politicians.

Q. *Like Satish Sharma, Romesh Bhandari and P.V. Narasimha Rao. Do they also come for spiritual guidance?*

A. The first time it may be for spiritual guidance, but later a rapport develops because of similar views and ideas.

Q. *What are Rajiv's stars like?*

A. His future is bright. He will continue in politics. The threat to his life is over. He will die a natural death.

Q. *How will Chandra Shekhar perform as the prime minister?*

A. Chandra Shekhar will be a successful prime minister. His future is bright. He will achieve success in solving the country's economic crisis and two other major problems.

Q. *Which two?*

A. I haven't thought about these as yet.

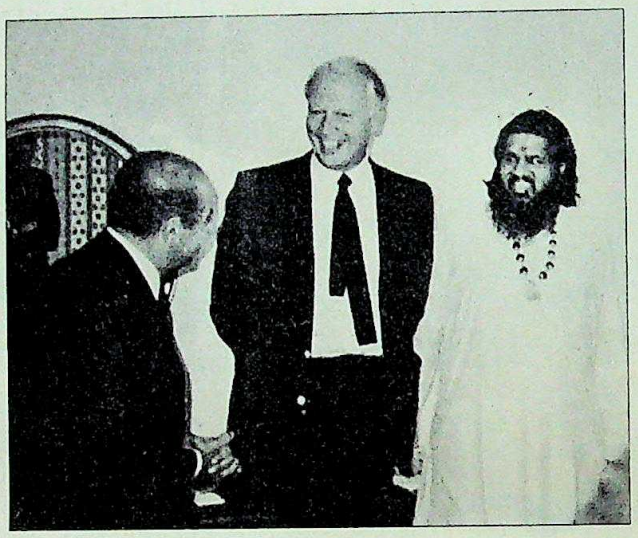
Q. *There is talk of the Congress(I) withdrawing support.*

A. There will be no mid-term poll for the next two years. Chandra Shekhar will remain prime minister. No elections before March 1993.

Q. *When will V.P. Singh become prime minister again?*

A. Never. He has been, forever, rejected by the people and the Parliament. I first met him in 1976 as deputy commerce minister and realised then that he can sacrifice anything and anyone for his own personal gains. That's why when there was talk of his becoming prime minister, I strongly opposed it. The Britishers, in 200 years divided the country into three parts—Hindus, Muslims, and Sikhs but this man took only 11 months to divide this country into 3,000 pieces.

With Ardbo and Khashoggi



I went to Ayodhya to unite the swamys, not to break them. Saints are never destructive.

Q. *Controversial people like Adnan Khashoggi and the Sultan of Brunei are among your close friends.*

A. They are very good friends and I take their names with pride. Our is a spiritual relationship, they have faith in my astrological powers and meditation. They are powerful, well known men and since I have come to be associated with them, I'm also talked about. It doesn't bother me, in fact it makes me happy.

Q. *How can a swamy have an arms dealer for a friend?*

A. I am proud to have him as a friend. He went to jail for four months even though he was being offered immunity. Where will you find friends with such character. He is no longer an arms dealer but a trader. See, *hinsak ko ahinsak bana diya.*

Q. *You are a high-flying swamy, fond of jets, yachts and cars.*

A. Yes I have to high-fly. Because when I stay with the heads of state or people like Khashoggi I have to adapt to their style. But I am not always high flying. When I went to Ayodhya I went in an ordinary ambassador car.

Q. *Rich and powerful men come to you for guidance. What do you charge?*

A. Nobody in the world can say that I have taken a fee. I consider it against religion to charge money for spiritual powers. This is a gift of God.

Q. *They give it as donation?*

A. The donations go to the trust.

Q. *But you need money for yourself?*

A. There are a lot of devotees who take care of my needs.

Q. *What is your bank balance?*

A. Zero. If you can find any bank account in my name, anywhere in the world, it is all yours.

Q. *Pamella Bordes has charged that you introduced her to the oldest profession in the world.*

A. Look, nobody brings anyone, the person's own character is responsible. Moreover, I am a Mahatma. I have all kinds of people coming to me, good and bad, and if the bad don't come, how will they become good. Have you read her autobiography, she says that she always advised me to live in the Indian style. She has not cast any aspersions on my character nor said that I had any relations with her. She came to me but didn't listen to my advice and her destiny took her where she is.

Q. *How is it that you are in the middle of all controversies?*

A. Because I know all those people who get into controversies. It is part of friendship to partake in their joys and sorrows and I don't regret my friendships.

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INTELLECTUALS

Neo, Pseudo, Natty

The intellectual is no longer cloistered in libraries, but is now upwardly mobile—a travelling salesman holding forth on myriad issues in newspapers and seminars.

By MADHU JAIN

WHEN Mrs Gandhi or her son Rajiv went abroad on formal trips their request for a "meeting with intellectuals", which received top billing on their official itineraries, left their hosts puzzled. Such a generic cohort doesn't exist there: there are academics, scholars, economists, journalists, scientists, diplomats, but not just "intellectuals".

But to anyone familiar with the Indian scene, Mrs Gandhi's would not have been a strange request. Because in the land of her origin intellectuals have been a traditional institution—influencing policy, social movements, and political debate. They have been, way out of proportion to their numbers, centres of power to be reckoned with. So meeting them abroad, Indian leaders have believed for a long time, is another way of powerful lobbying—the brain as an extension of diplomacy.

It was also a way of putting India's best foot forward. Foreign nations may have looked in disdain at India's wretched poverty. But the ever image-conscious Indian leaders have always sought to portray to the world that despite India's physical squalor, the nation is blessed with a rich mineload of spiritual and cerebral superiority rooted in the ancient tradition of her sages—the men and women who left the world of physical pain and pleasure and retreated into the wilderness of the mind from where they were able to spread what was the purest of all learning: the ordering of the material world by distinction between illusion and reality.

And the tradition continued in a more patrician model. Jawaharlal Nehru was an intellectual. So was S. Radhakrishnan. And C. Rajagopalachari and Sampurnanand. So why go westwards to look for intellectuals? They're here in droves, cerebrating all over the place. Talking, talking, talking. Not of Nehru's stature, perhaps, not of a Naoroji, a Tilak, an Aurobindo, or even a K.M. Pannikar. But they're nonetheless fretting and strutting on the Indian stage, demanding attention, appropriating importance.

Where do you go about looking for this creature on the eve of the 21st century? How, indeed, do you spot the real one? His gentility more polished, he now blends in with the upwardly mobile. Even the watering holes of the intellectuals have changed. You won't find him hunched over dusty volumes in musty libraries and puzzling over *la condition humaine*. Or measuring it out in endless coffee cups in university canteens. The intellectual has turned into a travelling salesman, with himself on offer. He zips around in his Maruti when not expounding on reservations and OBCs in seminars at Harvard even as India burns. Or he holds forth on other issues tearing India apart in the cool groves of academe abroad: communalism, fundamentalism and poverty are good tickets to ride.

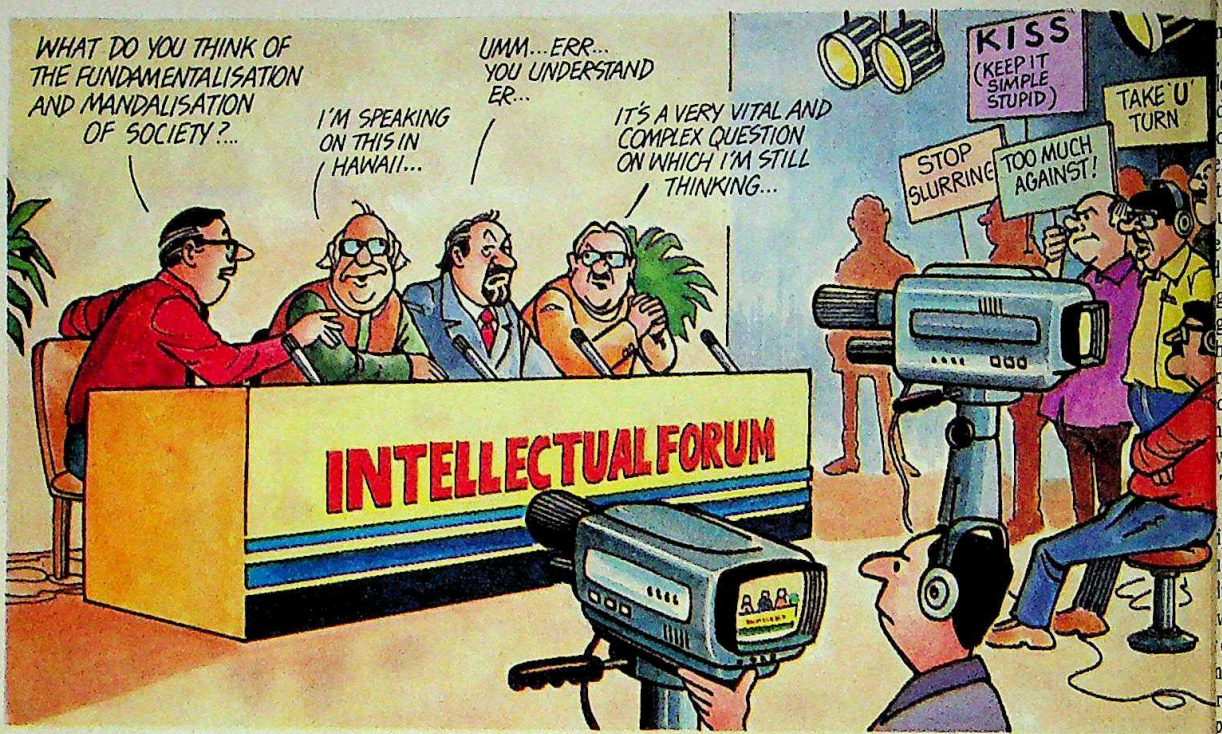
Traditionally, there have been two kinds of intellectuals.



Cartoons by AJIT NINAN and ANIL SHARMA

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The ivory tower kind, immune even to wooing by the Government, they draw up the drawbridges to those towers. But they are an endangered species.

The other is the intellectual-as-courtier: from the courts of the maharajas down through the various prime ministers, he's played the Raag Darbari—changing his tune to whatever sounds like music to his master's ears. From sycophantic poems to biographies in more recent times. Today's courtier can design his theories, whether political or economic, to fit the needs of the powers that be.

And over the last decade this tribe has multiplied, and is omnipresent. It's clearly the day of the intellectual as courtesan. "We are now available," says P.N. Haksar, a genuine *eminence grise* who ought to know. He along with others like D.P. Dhar and Mohan Kumaramangalam were the back seat drivers when Mrs Gandhi turned a sharp left turn in the late '60s (bank nationalisation, abolition of privy purses).

But they were thinkers, at least believers in a cause. Among their wide range of gurus were Spinoza, Heidegger, Kant, Kierkegaard, Schopenhauer, Bertrand Russell and the Shastras for some—all read and well digested. Later came Sartre, Herbert Marcuse, Michel Foucault, Derrida, Roland Barthes, Lacan.

Nehru leaned heavily on intellectual thought, on Aristotle and Socrates, on Plato and the Rig Veda, and passed on some of this fervour, however diluted, to his daughter. She in turn tried to pass it on to her son Rajiv Gandhi. Unfortunately, the circle of advisers he cultivated degenerated, as did the quality of intellect of the politicians. It was a long journey from Dr S. Radhakrishnan to Mani Shankar Aiyar.

Today's intellectual or ideologue is like a cheer-leader but only that he is rooting for the winning side. "The intellectual has lost his moral authority," says Nikhil Chakravartty, editor of *Mainstream*. "He's also decorative, just like Dresden pottery."

The audience of the intellectual has changed. They are now addressing each other, playing parlour games in their rarified worlds. That is if they are not, as is now *de rigueur* performing at diplomatic soirees. A favourite parlour game the card-party act. Which nation is playing what card: th Afghan, Chinese, American or Russian?

India may not have a contemporary Sakharov or Sartre o a Solzhenitsyn making seminal contributions to the directio of the nation. But it does have its rent-a-quote intellectua with a ready quote for every occasion from his easiflik mind From Mandal to Mandela. From the Hindu psyche to Rolan Barthes—or the price of eggs.

SURVIVAL in this age of Maggi-noodle-intellectualit means agility. The most demanding being television, th latest forum of the intellectual. The tele-intellectual ha to tailor his theories to the designs of the reigning powers of th day. "You should see how the academics fall in line," says seasoned TV moderator. "The producer has only to hint whic line to follow and they go full steam on that track." U-turns ar deftly done without batting an eyelid.

The television intellectual is quick: capsule intellectuality no errs and umms. Moreover, it is important for him to loo good while delivering those easy-to-swallow capsules. Say young historian Harsh Sethi from the Centre for Developin Studies about the emerging new intellectual: "Earlier th intellectuals read books, now they read newspapers. Earlie they wrote books, now they write articles in newspapers Nuances have turned into the thickest brushstrokes."

In this day and age of high living and pedestrian thinking intellectuals "petition-monger at the drop of a hat instead o writing 1,000 word articles in newspapers", complained Chandan Mitra, editor of *The Sunday Observer*. The petition- intellectual enjoyed high-visibility during the last few days of the previous government. Somewhat akin to a daily dose, the government media would faithfully dole out the views of 'intellectuals' on secularism.

But this new breed is a bit too quick on the draw: the parachute-intellectual whips up his reports before he absorbs

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ground realities. One day visits to
ne of the nation's troubled spots (Pun-
Jammu and Kashmir, the Narmada
ley, and the North-east) and he's
dy with his accusatory finger and long
orts based on interviews with much-
erviewed activists. However, he tends
turn a Nelson's eye to the events
und him which do not fit his theories.
dividing line between the intellectual
the politico is disappearing. "The
guage of the academic has become the
guage of the politician," laments
hi. Words like "fascist" (a four-letter
rd in the intellectual's lexicon) are
d as freely as commas. And to label
neone 'neo-Hegelian' is to run him
vn completely.

The woman intellectual—most of-
socialist-feminist—is more visible,
ipatetic and concerned about the
ies she is fighting for. Quote-banks
lude sociologist Veena Das, Gayatri-
vac Chakravarty (expatriate profes-
of English literature), editor Mrinal
nde, journalist-activist Madhu Kish-
r of *Manushi*, the Kali for Women duo,
pul Jayakar, and danseuse Chandralekha.

However, behind the enthusiasm and lung power, there
lies anxiety. The reason is that so far, in India the left was
onymous with the intellectual; but with the collapse of
rxism worldwide that tautology has gone. The last linger-
photo finish being the crumbling of the Berlin Wall, as with
ll, the Humpty Dumpty eggheads came tumbling down.
Despite the fact that the bastions of the Left have crumbled
where in the world, the Indian leftist or socialist is among
last to admit that his citadel is under siege. He has not put
ay his Marxist looking glass. All the same he has lost some
is moorings, his ideological compass.

And into this vacuum has stepped the Right, though it's
quite the Occidental right.

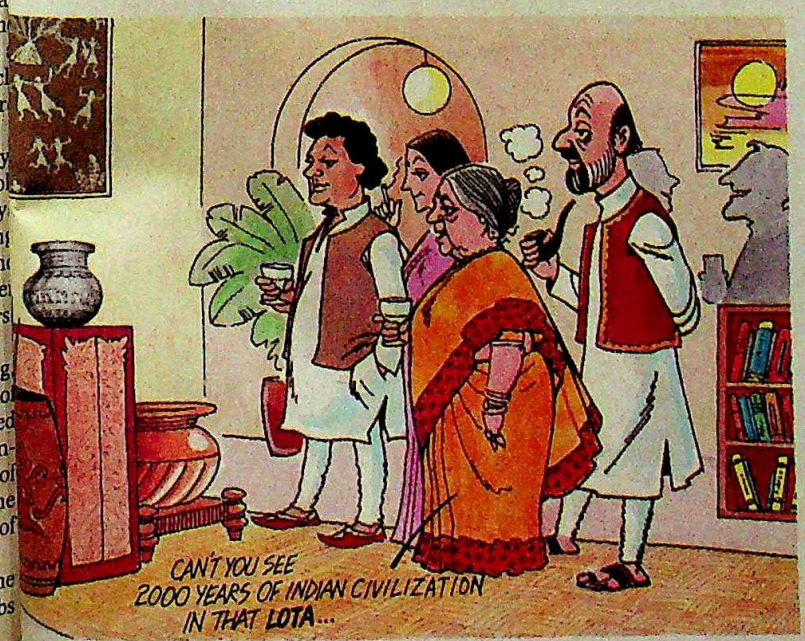


While the gods of Europe might have failed, in India, the gods have changed: there's a ready supply of real deities. The new Indian Right is the Hindu Right. Ram Janmabhoomi appears to be the cue for the nascent Hindu intellectual to come on stage in full costume. Not that he didn't exist before. He was always in the wings, waiting.

FOR Girilal Jain, the coming of the Hindu intellectual has been not a moment too soon. "This is India today: the past reasserting itself, wanting to come above ground and not be beaten back and driven underground by those in command again and again," he explains. "Instead of a healthy interaction we have a rootless intellectual class with borrowed values and organisations and an Indian past which emerges from the underground in distorted forms."

The saffron Right, however, is beginning to peep out of the closet. The K.R. Malkanis, Jay Dubashis, Arun Shouries, Girilal Jains and others have given the new Right a vocabulary and contemporaneity. A clear example of this budding brigade is that of journalist Swapan Das Gupta who has actually done that neo-pilgrim's progress from Marxism (St Stephens in the afterglow of Naxalism), to Trotskyism at the London School of Oriental and African Studies and stirrings of the Right (Oxford in the early '80s).

Das Gupta's recent article in *The Times of India* describes the response to BJP President L.K. Advani's rath yatra as a "mass upsurge", a mass movement comparable to Jayaprakash Narayan's movement. There was a volley of letters in protest, in print. But on the party circuit, he was the toasted one. "I expected brickbats from the Left, but the



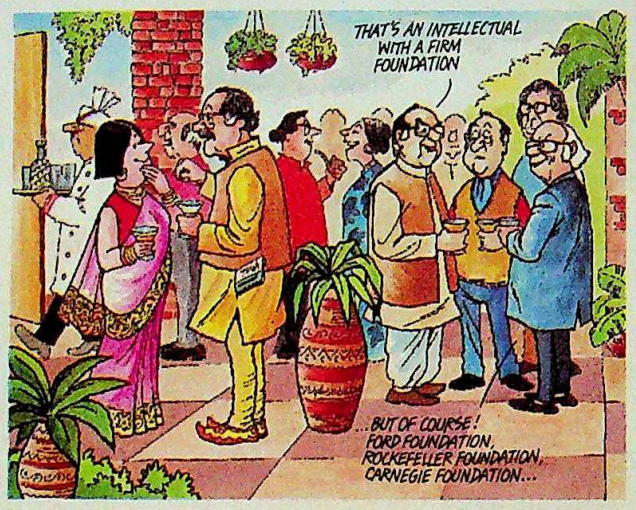
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positive response surprised me."

The phrase "appeasement of the minorities" has not only gained currency but also social acceptability. Psychoanalyst Sudhir Kakar sees the nascent emergence of a Hindu Right as a response to the need for an Indian identity, some of which has come from abroad. "The need to assert oneself abroad is getting stronger. The only basis for an Indian identity or security is a strong, powerful India. Not a fragmented one," he says.

Somewhere along the way being a nationalist is subtly getting to mean being a Hindu. "There's a sense of disquiet which will turn roguish if not seen or addressed," argues Das Gupta. Like others who think like him, this thirst for identity comes in the wake of the "breakdown of the Nehruvian consensus". The Indian intellectual is now divided on the image of India. India as one nation is no longer taken for granted. Until the '50s there was a consensus on what is the Indian state. Now the question on many lips is: whether secular democracy, or even India as a nation-state can survive.



EVEN as the ideologues of the Left and Right battle it out, often in newsprint, the nouveau-intellectual has sneaked into the limelight. The professional intellectual has arrived. He could be an MBA, a designer, journalist, anything vaguely literate. "Philistines are trying to become intellectuals. Even the adman thinks he is one," says Chakravartty.

This *arriviste* (a nouveau-anything) brings with him glamour. The salon may not have come of age, but socialite evenings now serve the current bureaucrat-intellectual heart-throbs—usually economists, preferably Harvard-returned ex-World Bank, IMF, Ministry of Finance, writers, artists and aesthetes. (The last went out of fashion with the previous government but one. But they seem to be coming back.) The ethnic flash restrained by good taste dominates. In fact, you even have to be intellectual in the discourse about saris: women come and go talking about Pochampallis, Gadvals, and the count of the sari.

But if saris are intellectual, also high on the list is Tibet. Suddenly Tibet (Tibs to the knowing few) is in fashion at these evenings—suggesting a rediscovery of Buddhism. And now that Richard Gere comes by every few months, all the Pretty Women are freshening up on Buddhism.

While the intellectual as entertainer has had high visibility for quite some time, the latest variety is the entertainer-as-intellectual. As the last days of V.P. Singh's reign drew to a close, he organised a day-long marathon for intellectuals to speak on communalism. On the list: Shabana Azmi, Dilip Kumar, Raj Babbar, Shatrughan Sinha and Tiger Pataudi—all entertainers-as-intellectuals.

Expectedly, Delhi is the Mecca of them all. One reason for this is that Delhi has the Ford Foundation and other "resourceful" organisations (the Rockefeller Foundation has made a quiet return with a small office) which are like launch pads to the international circuit for this growing tribe. Recently the rush to save the planet is a short cut to this contemporary scholarly heaven. The intellectuals are not shy about what they want. Says Sudarshan, an official at the Ford Foundation: "No intellectual would give up a sabbatical or seminar at Harvard." While they might write volumes about the oppressed and the underprivileged, or make tear-jerking films about them, that certainly does not stop them from running to Ford for scholarships to American universities for their offspring and grants for themselves.

When at home the intellectual is most often to be seen in New Delhi's India International Centre, the equivalent of what the Mall in Simla once was for pretty young things on parade. Here, ideas are on parade. But then it's not quite enough to be an intellectual. You even have to be seen as being one.

Overlooking the Lodhi Gardens, the intellectuals who haunt the Centre solve the problems of the world and talk about poverty. The Centre's Saturday discussion club (lunch) is for the older lot who call themselves "intellectuals": retired bureaucrats, diplomats and journalists. They chew over roast lamb and mint sauce along with the hot topic of the day. Not to lag behind, Patna too has its Sunday club for "intellectual discussion". With the glamourisation of the intellectual, the real intellectual, like the church-mouse scholar has been elbowed out—to a dingy, perks-less world. The intellectual according to Kakar ought to be a "nagger, a carper". "He should be a mirror which shows up the blemishes." But the intellectual hustler has moved in, flattering his way to the top and around the world.

The Intellectual Vogue

Say mentalité not mentality. For society use polity. For efficacy use effectivity. For symbol use signifier. For method of writing say discursive strategy.

Words to impress with: Subaltern for underprivileged. Post-colonial. Post-modern. Deconstruction. Instrumentality. Biggest buzz word, Hindutva.

To be rude: Neo-Hegelian (*gaali* for idealist). Nationalist: too Hindu.

Names to drop: Sartre, Camus are *passe*. Jacques Derrida, Jacques Lacan, Michel Foucault, Roland Barthes still in. New Favourites: Edward Said, Gayatri Spivac Chakravarty, Fernand Braudel, A.K. Ramanujan.

Books to Mention: European and Latin American writers top the list. Marquez, Maria Vargas Llosa, Carlos Fuentes, Milan Kundera still in. Carrying a Granta adds cachet. Rushdie, of course. Also Amitav Ghosh, Vikram Seth.

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ROYAL SURRENDER



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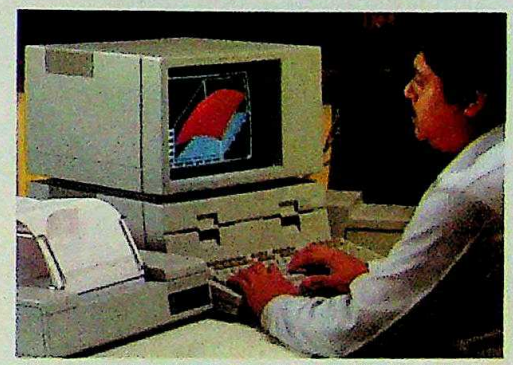


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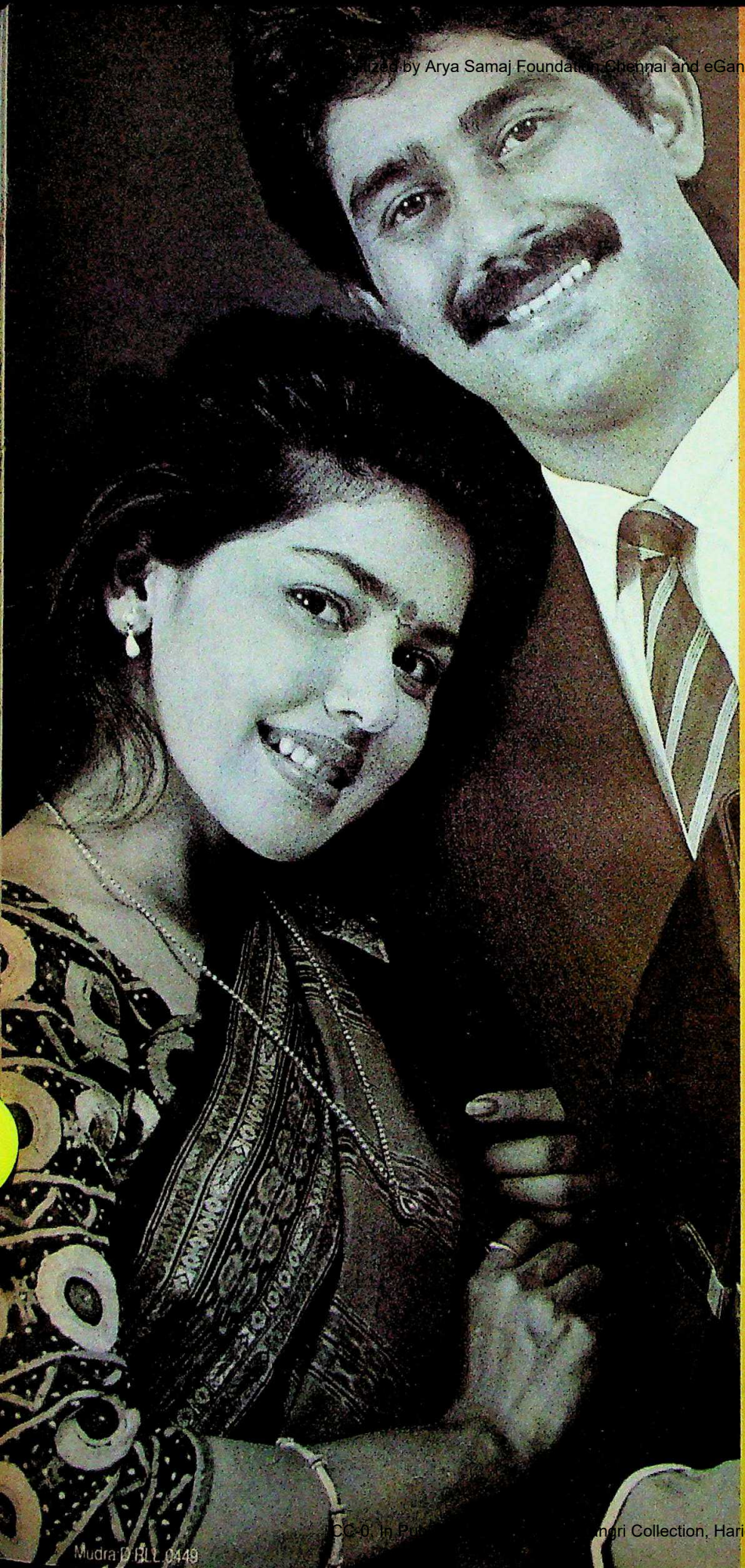
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"Thank God for someone like her"

She loves me for my hardworking ways.
She also fights because of them.
She likes my getting ahead in life and the presents I get her.
She dislikes the demands made upon me and my time.
It's not that she doesn't understand, but I guess it gets too much for her. (And there's little I can do about it).
She gives me tips to stay healthy and look good. She also hates the looks others give me.
She even sees to it that I don't suffer from the problems normally associated with someone like me.
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You know it's because of those two Garlic Pearls she gives me everyday.
I often wonder what I'd do without her.
And whenever someone compares me with friends my age, I silently thank God for a wife like her.
But she always says.
"Thanks to Garlic Pearls"



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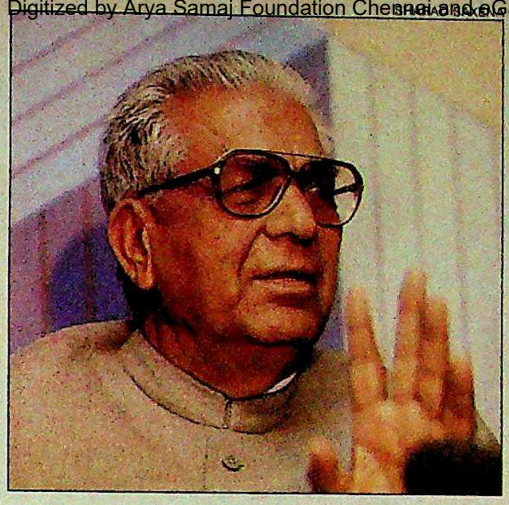
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◆ Doordarshan seems o be getting sneaky. It had uite a live-wire iscussion on communal armony during *Aaj Kal* elecast two days before kar ewa. During the show, he DD men sent in a slip elling moderator Mrinal ande to bring up Rajiv's ormula for the Ayodhya ontroversy. Pande, owever, ignored the irective. Earlier, in a rogramme steered by aeed Naqvi on the rath atra, those invisible en in the back suggested hat the BJP be criticised.

◆ DD is getting to be ke Russian roulette. You ever know when you ill come across the real hing. A case in point: a ocumentary *Conspicuous onsumption* by two nknowns—Neeraj and ankaj Mahajan—hich appeared last ortnight. Moving away om the cliched xtaposition of the very ich and the very poor, the ahajans zoomed in on he aspirations of the rgeoning middle class. t also documented the sires of the children of he slums. (Marutis were he most common bjects of desire). Most evealing was the eeping up with the Jones mongst the new rich of he villages. The lady of the ouse prefers her old hulha outdoors, even hough she has a gas linder and a refrigerator.

◆ Sponsor sources for D appear to be drying up. o it seems from the fact hat scheduled programmes ke *Itihas Ke Gawah*, *ribals of the North-east*, *unehera Wark* are back the cans as there are no ponsors. Even a programme ke *Race To Save The lanet* had to be postponed nd then changed from a ponsored programme to a C offering. But DD esn't seem deterred



PRASHANT PANJIAR

▲ Devi Lal: greening the small screen



▲ Govind Nihalani: moving to European classics



▶ Kapil Dev: making a debut

and is all set to soon air *Sportlight*—a sports news magazine that has been given to three producers, one of whom is Kapil Dev.

◆ *Tamas* is a difficult act to follow on the small screen. But Govind Nihalani seems set to do it with three Hindi telefilms based on modern European classics. He's just completed *Rukmavati Ki Haveli*, the working title of his adaptation of Federico Garcia Lorca's *The House of Bernada Alba*, with Uttara Baokar, Pallavi Joshi and Kittu Gidwani. The other two telefilms are Ibsen's *Little Eyolf* and Strindberg's *Father*. "*Rukmavati Ki Haveli* is a tragedy caused by a system that places secondary importance to basic human urges," he says.

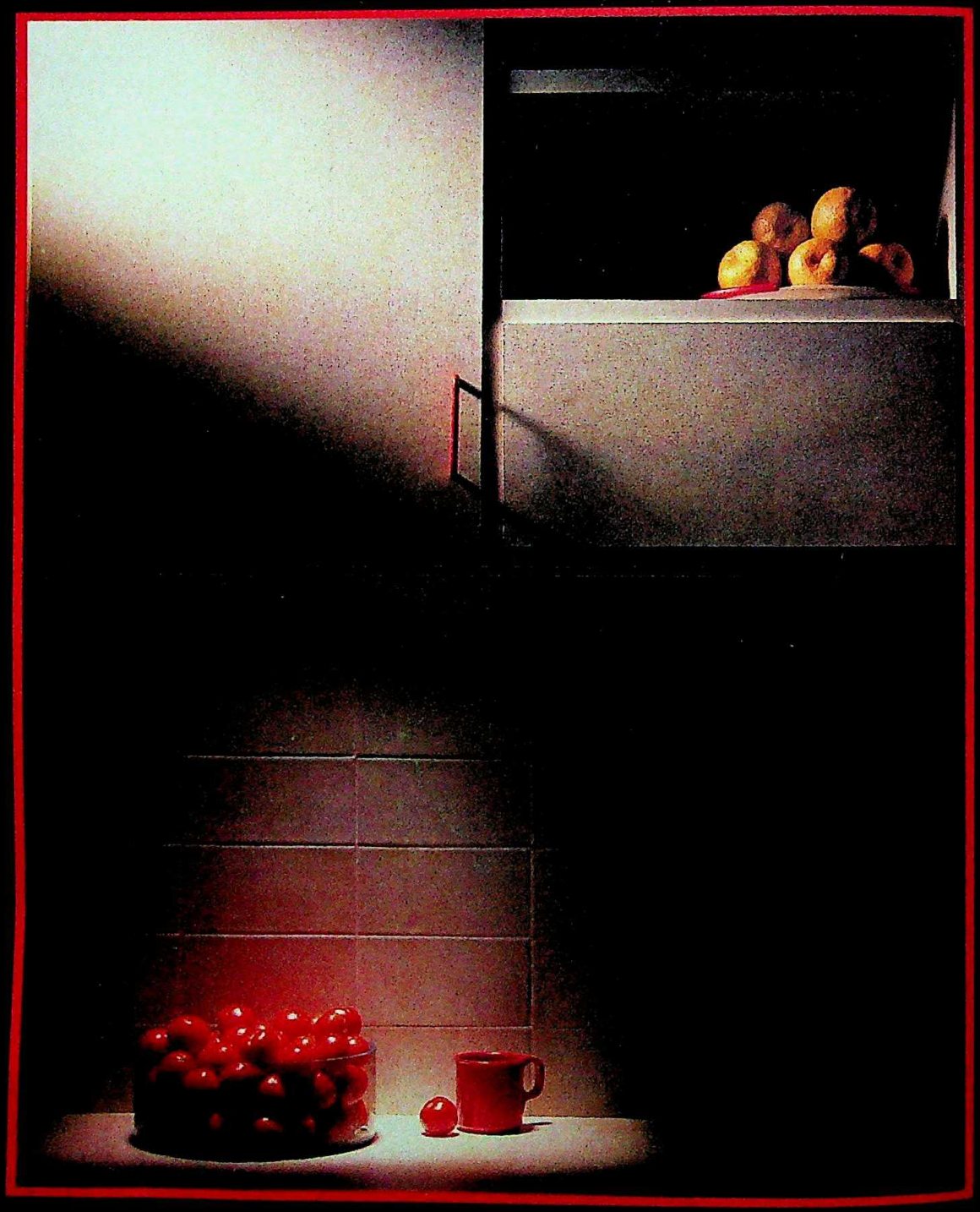
◆ If Devi Lal had his way, there'd be a thorough greening of Doordarshan. Recently he shot off a letter to the secretary, the I&B Ministry, asking him to transfer A.S. Grewal, deputy director-general, DD to head the news set-up in place of Kripa Sagar. Apparently, he was peeved his deliberations on the farm policy were not carried and that the voice from the green fields of Haryana came through feebly on the tube.

◆ Sychophancy doesn't stop at the Centre. Even DD's regional kendras are not bad at it. Last fortnight, Bombay beamed the life and times of Maharashtra Governor Sharad Pawar—on prime time, too. The occasion: the 50th birthday of the Congress(I) satrap. Clearly, prime time is reserved for both prime ministers and chief ministers.

—MADHU JAIN

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CANADA

Pitching for Cricket

The game becomes increasingly popular



CRICKET, once considered a "wimp's game" in Canada, is fast losing its image as an elitist sport played by white flanelled Anglophones.

Massive crowds for three cricket games in Toronto this year all seem to indicate that cricket could soon find a place in the pantheon of Canadian sport which is currently dominated by body-contact games like ice hockey and American football.

According to Rod Taylor, executive director of the Canadian Cricket Association, more than 60,000 people are playing the sport across the nation. During a recent 50-over fixture between West Indies and Rest of the World almost 25,000 fans, mostly immigrants from West Indies and India, turned up.

Says a confident Ben Sennik, 57, organiser of last year's first international cricket fixture at Toronto's Sky Dome—a Cdn $550 million state-of-the-art ballpark with a retractable roof: "Toronto can offer anything that Sharjah can. We have the people, the money, to stage at least two major games a year."

Thousands of delirious, flag-waving Indian supporters lustily cheered Indian players—Kapil Dev, Manoj Prabhakar, Maninder Singh, and Sachin Tendulkar—as the Rest of the World lost a cliff hanger to the West Indies recently. The stars were delighted with the even bounce of the specially-imported wicket, the artificial lighting and the stadium's retractable roof. Said Azharuddin: "This is the best cricket stadium in the world. Even better than the Melbourne ground." Other senior players like Rest of the World's captain Imran Khan were equally optimistic about the future of the game at the Sky Dome. Said Khan: "This annual Sky Dome venture is a great start. Now all that's needed is exposure on TV."

Cricket, in fact, has had a chequered history in Canada since its introduction on the eastern coast by British soldiers. According to the archives of the Canadian Cricket Association, the first game was played at Ile St. Helene, now Montreal, in 1784.

But, it was mainly in York, later Toronto, that the game developed roots. The Toronto Cricket Club, the country's first such association, was established in 1827. By 1844, Canada and the US met in their first international match at the St. George's club in New York. This was more than 30 years before the England vs Australia Ashes series—widely recognised as the beginning of international cricket.

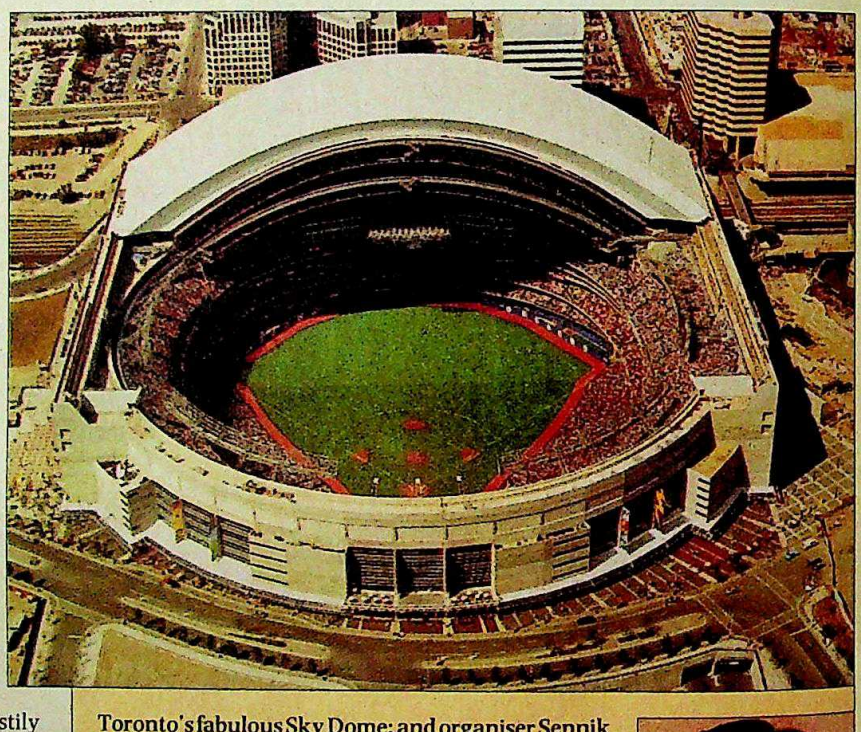
By 1867, the game had become so popular that John A. MacDonald, Canada's first prime minister, declared it the national sport. English teams began a steady stream of visits and the game established a loyal following. But that couldn't last forever. By the early 20th century its popularity waned.

It wasn't until 1963, that the US series was revived, but by then it was all too late. The game had been under covers so long that it failed to rekindle the interest of those who had grown used to a steady diet of baseball on TV.

It was only last year that the game showed signs of a comeback in Canada, due mainly to an aggressive promotion campaign in schools. Today more than 400 schools in Ontario, the country's largest English-speaking province on the eastern coast, are churning out cricketers for 80 teams that play league cricket in the province.

Most of these students have been raised on Kanga cricket, a form that was first popularised in Australia and normally played with a plastic ball and bat to reduce the risk of injury. And considering that there are more than a lakh of cricket lovers in Toronto alone, as a survey revealed, Canada can safely be called cricket's new turf.

—SATINDER BINDRA in Toronto



Toronto's fabulous Sky Dome; and organiser Sennik

The burgeoning immigrant population is providing a real impetus to the game.

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RAMOJI RAO

The Maverick Magnate

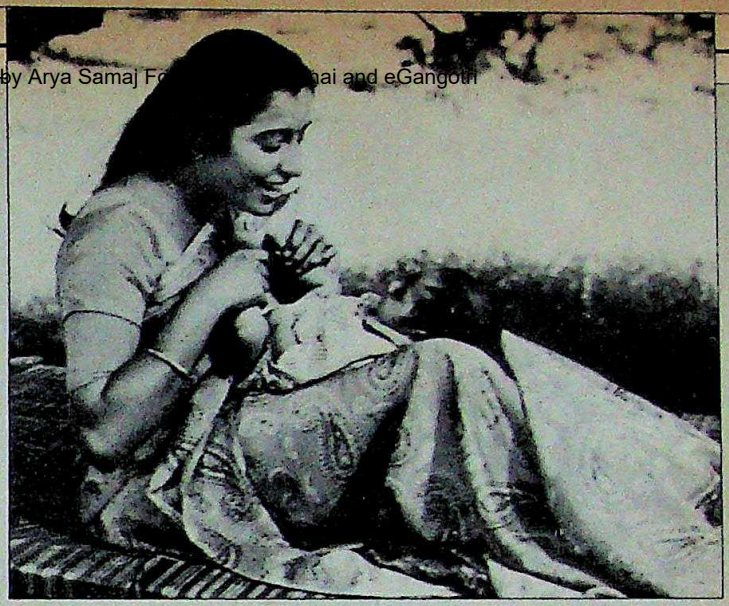
After 17 films the Telugu producer has a unique niche

WHEN a man whose company makes pickles which are popular country-wide begins to make films, it is to be expected that his celluloid creations will contain dollops of masala. But Ramoji Rao's films unlike his Priya Pickles have little spice in them. On the contrary they contain slices of life, seasoned in reality, capturing both its bitterness and sweetness. No wonder then, that a decade after he started producing films under the banner of Ushakiron Movies, he has emerged as a top Telugu film maker.

His most recent hit, *Pratighatana* (Struggle), remade in Hindi as *Pratighat*, which portrayed the criminalisation of politics in Vijayawada grossed Rs 2.50 crore, an amazing profit margin considering he spent only Rs 25 lakh to produce it. So was the case with his earlier *Mayuri* which in gripping fashion showed the struggle of a disabled girl to master dancing using an artificial leg. Sudha Chandran who played out her real life trauma in the movie became a national celebrity. For Ramoji Rao it was another clinching proof of his cinematic philosophy: "For me, the story should be gripping. The story is my hero and my heroine."

It indeed has been. Not for Ramoji Rao the dictates of the star system. He set his own rules and it was not the glitzy corridors of the film world, not its larger-than-life image, that drew him to it. Says he: "I wanted to improve the quality of films by making them in a planned and organised manner instead of treating them like a gamble."

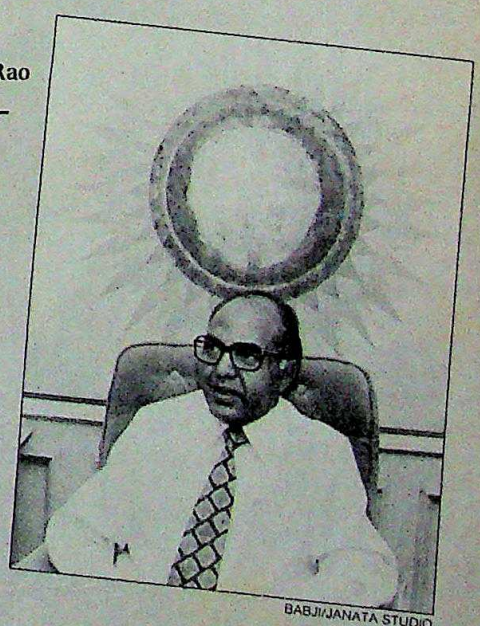
Yet, initially, to others his style must have reeked of a gamble. Signing on a handicapped girl like Sudha Chandran to play the lead in a movie was unheard of. But it showed how much faith Rao had in what he wanted to do. The way he still works on his films shows that for him the stars are neither pawns nor decked-up prima donnas who prance around the stage and then run laughing all the way from under the arc lights to the bank. But Rao cannot be given credit for pioneering this genre of middle cinema





Suhasini in *Amma* (top), Bhanupriya in *People's Encounter;* and Ramoji Rao

For Ramoji Rao the story is all that matters and he brushes aside the dictates of the star system.



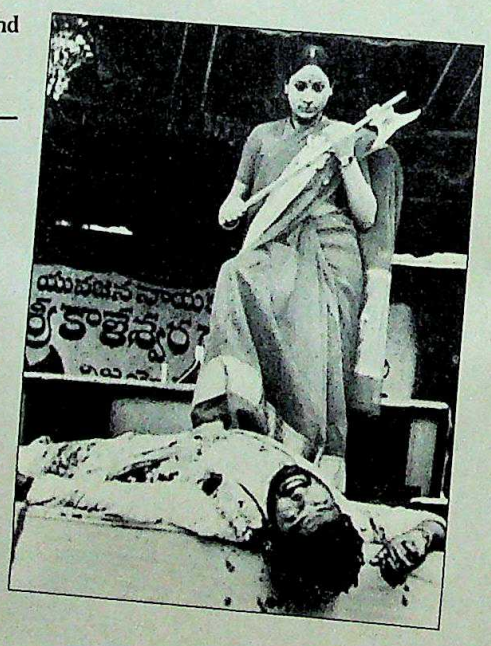
BABJI/JANATA STUDIO

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Disabled Sudha Chandran in *Mayuri* and (right) Vijayashanti in *Pratighatana*



Every second film Ramoji Rao has produced portrays the fight of women against injustice

for as Urvasi award winning actress Suhasini says: "Realistic themes have been given similar treatment by directors like Balachander."

According to Rao the star system and the big budget strategy made production a black-hole into which many producers fell. Rao wanted to show them where it all went wrong. As Telugu film producer Rama Naidu puts it: "Discipline and a good story department are his biggest assets."

Most of all what Rao did was to pick up soul-tugging incidents normally buried in the back pages of newspapers and bring them alive on screen. Sudha Chandran's odyssey would have been thrown into the waste-paper baskets with the month's papers were it not for Ramoji Rao who saw in that little report a lesson for every man.

SIMILARLY his *Mouna Poratam* (Silent battle) which was inspired by the story of a tribal girl who was used by an official and then dumped, was a singular triumph. The tribal girl had sat on a satyagraha outside the official's house pressuring him to marry her.

This uncanny ability to spot the contours of a mega story in a two-inch report can only be that of an editor. Nor is Rao any mean editor or businessman. He owns and edits the Telugu daily *Eenadu* (circulation: three lakh) and the English daily *Newstime*. His burgeoning group (turnover: Rs 200 crore) with the 28-year old Margadarshi Chit Fund—his first venture—as the flagship has by now entered as diverse fields as ship breaking, computers and hotels, apart from pickle and fruit juice making.

If in *Mouna Poratam* and *Mayuri* he showed women taking up arms against a sea of troubles, three of his forthcoming movies—*People's Encounter*, *Amma* and *Aswini*—too have women as protagonists. In fact in every second film, among the 17 he has so far produced, the focus has been on a woman, a bold move away from formula films where women come in front of the camera to titillate or to induce tears and are then banished to the wings while the hero flexes his muscles.

Many feel that much of the success of his films is because of his shrewd sales strategy. "His greatest strength is the aggressive marketing. He sells a film as if it was a soap," says director Jandhyala who directed Rao's first film *Srivari Premalekha* (Love letter from a husband) in 1984 and is directing another one for him next year. Rao has the last word on all aspects of production. But this I-hold-the-reins style of management has kept away some of the most accomplished directors of the south from him.

Other leading producers feign contempt for him, saying he always plays safe and does not risk big budget extravaganzas. "He makes a virtue of the fact that he does not hire big stars. Actually he does not want to spend money," says a producer who doesn't want to be named. He has clout too. Says actress Bhanupriya: "Only a pressman with the kind of clout Ramoji Rao has can shoot a film like *People's Encounter* in front of the legislative assembly for a week."

The 54-year-old Rao has enough reason to gloat over his achievements like any empire builder does. But like a tireless trapeze artiste he swings from venture to venture not happy with what he has. Another ambitious plan is to put up an high-tech film studio in Hyderabad where he has produced all his films. "Nobody in business says enough is enough," the magnate, who is always dressed in spotless white, says. And if the high rate of success his films have had is any indication, it seems the audience too hasn't had enough.

—AMARNATH K. MENON

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ARITHMETIC DOESN'T MAKE MUSIC



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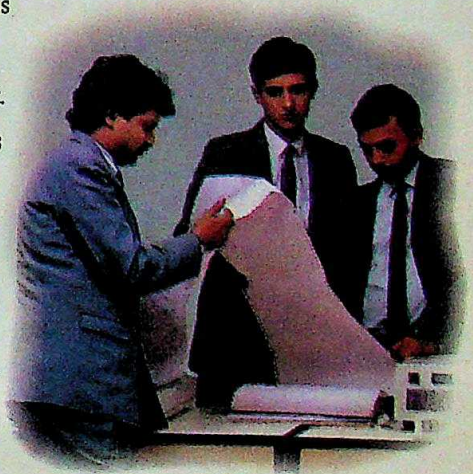
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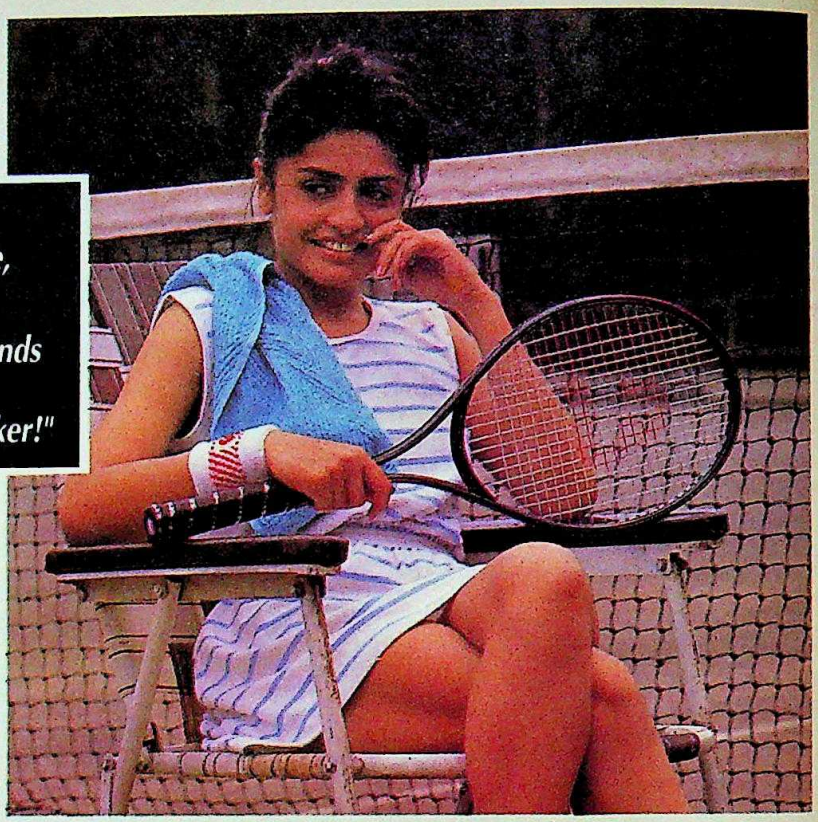
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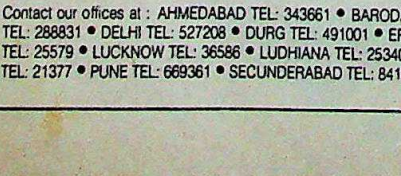
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Declare Nuclear Status

FROM now on, for policy planning, both India and Pakistan have to consider each other 'de facto' nuclear weapon powers. Otherwise, miscalculations may lead to catastrophic damage. In this new situation, even many of the ruling elites may not comprehend what the order of damage could be, of an Indo-Pak nuclear exchange. The public is also generally unaware. Broadly, the effect of one 20 kiloton (equivalent to 20,000 tons of TNT) nuclear weapon fired as a 'low airburst' against a town of three million will cause half a million immediate deaths and about eight lakh delayed casualties. A pattern of three such weapons fired at a large metropolis will cause about one to two million immediate and two to three million delayed casualties. One such weapon aimed at a military target like an airfield situated about 2 to 3 km away from a small town of one million would cause 35,000 civilian casualties. Let us assume that Pakistan has at present five weapons and India can spare 15 for use against Pakistan. The Indian dead could amount to three to four million and Pakistani nine to 10 million. If only population centres are targeted, these figures could be worse. Apart from human casualties would be the destruction of cultural, historical and industrial assets. The differences between India and Pakistan, in geography, population and capabilities, may cause proportionately much more damage to Pakistan. But the damage to India would still be enormous in absolute terms. The nuclear reality demands, that on neither side, can a planner recommend nor any decision-maker accept any step that would have a high probability of leading to a nuclear exchange.



A declared nuclear weapon status and a tacit understanding of the strategic interests of both India and Pakistan would help in greatly reducing the chances of a nuclear exchange in the subcontinent.

What is it that India and Pakistan can do to ensure that the chances of miscalculation are reduced and unambiguous deterrent signals are sent to each other? It is essential that the nuclear weapon capability of each side should be clear to the other. This is best achieved by both sides adopting a declared nuclear weapon status. As to why this has not come about is a separate question. Pakistan might be concerned about losing military and economic aid from the US, seen as essential to counter an Indian threat. How real is this fear? During the years 1972-80, when there was hardly any large scale US aid and when India had a massive quantitative and qualitative edge, and when Pakistan was nowhere near a nuclear weapon capability, India did not take advantage and attack Pakistan. Why should it do so now? Possibly secrecy was necessary till all the clandestine imports for creating a nuclear capability were complete. But surely that stage has been reached now. Perhaps a time has come when Pakistan can ask itself whether it is really necessary to dilute its sovereignty to this extent for US approval. As far as India is concerned, it is more difficult to find excuses for shying away from a declared status today. Is it that the myth of the whites being more responsible than others is being subconsciously subscribed to? If so, is it forgotten that affluence made the Japanese 'honorary whites' in South Africa, and a large population and nuclear weapons made the Chinese 'honorary whites' too from the Nixon era on? Was the hesitation due to the lack of a long range delivery system vis-a-vis China? Surely that can no longer prevail after Agni. Or could it be because of that specious argument that the Chinese are so far ahead, that catching up is impossible and therefore what better than to emulate the ostrich?

THIS fails to take account of the fact that deterrence requires only the ability to hit back in retaliation and cause unacceptable damage to the other side. It does not demand equivalence in quality or quantity. Neither Pakistan nor India need feel guilty in opting for nuclear deterrence in legitimate defence. They can always disarm when the other decides to. However, for the present we must ensure that each side's nuclear capability is transparent to the other, even in the undeclared stage.

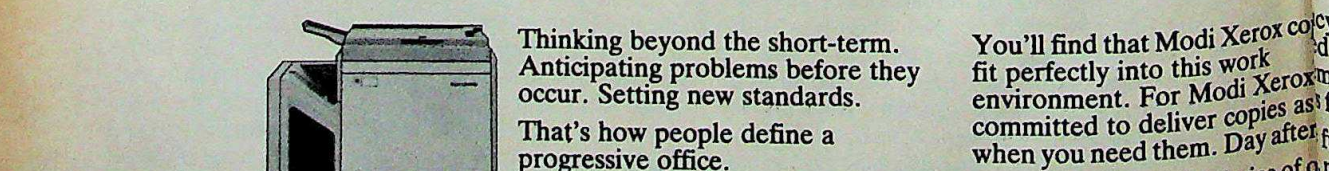
There should also be a clear understanding of what would be the core vital interests of each, a threat to which would very probably escalate into a nuclear exchange. This can only be achieved by discussions and debate within each country, followed by mutual discussions between experts from both sides. Given a tacit understanding of the basic ground rules, one can expect many confidence building measures to follow, both in the nuclear and conventional spheres. These could include declarations of 'no first use' of each other's nuclear weapon capability and mutual force reduction in conventional arms. Agreed limitations in nuclear systems can also follow after India's requirement for deterrence vis-a-vis China is taken into account. An era of cooperation in various realms of military activity can also be envisaged. This bilateral exercise can also be enlarged to embrace South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation.

In the mid '70s, when I was commanding an armoured division, I told my colleagues informally, that we ought to take Pakistan into our confidence and carry out future nuclear development jointly. This was received with incredulous looks and eloquent silence! In hindsight, I am absolutely certain that such a supreme confidence building measure might have changed the entire subcontinental history. Similarly, dealing with the insecurity of India's smaller neighbours, and credibly allaying their 'Kuwait Syndrome' could perhaps also be done by India gifting them a few short to medium range nuclear weapon systems without strings!

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Depredations of Television

GRASS WITHOUT ROOTS



By BUNKER ROY

IN a country where the percentage of illiteracy is still very high, where language and dialects are many and far between and where poverty prevents people from wasting money on luxuries such as TV and newspapers, it is insane to encourage a policy that plays one culture against another.

The culture of mass media may benefit urban India but for the millions who live in Bharat it is yet another powerful tool of exploitation, of spreading disinformation and of keeping the rural poor as impoverished as ever. Who are we trying to fool by establishing this vast network of TV stations at colossal cost when we know that over 300 million rural people today cannot afford to pay for electricity connections, what to say about TV sets. Those donated by the state governments to gram panchayats are either out of order or they eventually land up in the houses of sarpanches. At the cost of one minute of broadcasting time it is possible to support a village theatre group of four persons for one month, conveying crucial socio-economic messages. But this fact is deliberately overlooked because of the elite in government.

It was a series of puppet shows conveying information on what famine relief workers should get as minimum wages that provoked illiterate rural women to go on strike in Rajasthan: it led to the Supreme Court declaring the Famine Relief Act of Rajasthan unconstitutional.

Environmental awareness among the rural poor about the importance of protecting trees, ground water, small dams and rainwater harvesting leading to peoples' movements, struggles and a visible show of collective strength can be traced to village level puppet shows, street plays, theatre groups, nautankis, and folk musicians.

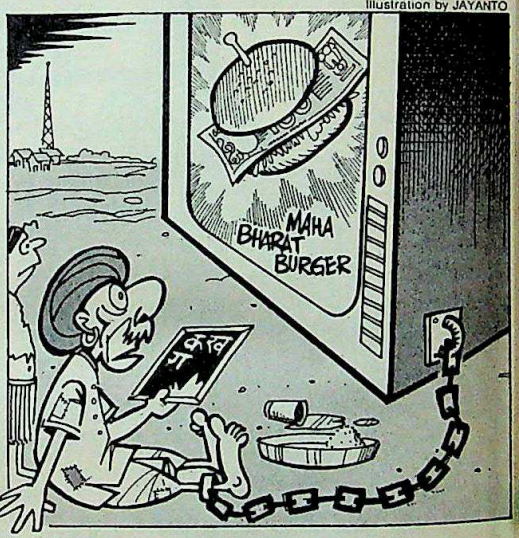
All of them live a hand to mouth existence because the Government considers them primitive, outdated and ineffective and would rather invest crores in setting up TV stations in the very areas where such rich culture exists. Rural communication arts that survive on face-to-face encounters with the public participating by asking questions and seeking answers and on direct exchange of knowledge and information are struggling to survive as some moronic people making policies at the top cannot see their value and importance.

Traditional drummers in many villages in India are being used to remind rural women when to take the pill for birth control: village street plays have been known to increase the attendance of the girl child in night schools and help in collecting funds from the community for installing hand pumps, and starting women development programmes.

Many voluntary groups all over the country are conducting training programmes, rewriting scripts and replacing myths and legends about kings and queens with powerful social messages on the evils of untouchability, child marriage, dowry, equal opportunities for women, the importance of learning how to read and write and on their rights to receive the minimum wages decided by the state. What comes over the TV on such issues is a one-minute filler that only helps the film maker: he is perhaps paid more for that garbage than village groups make in one year—if they are lucky.

The Government talks about generating employment in villages. Television has destroyed the livelihood of thousands of rural communicators and made them migrate to the slums of cities to do menial jobs. The Government talks about develop-

Illustration by JAYANTO



It is the puppet shows, street plays and nautankis, not TV that generate awareness in villages.

ing people over TV and reaching messages to the poor when mass media has, in fact, callously eroded the peoples' self-respect by showing how little they are worth.

Significantly they fall under the Department of Culture and they are expected to perform like monkeys in festivals abroad. They play to royalty and presidents in Europe and come back to *kutcha* hovels in villages, dependent on the upper castes for drinking water and cannot even send their children to school. The impression is that they must have made lots of money so they have no business to complain. Many claim to speak on their behalf: pseudo culture frauds in cities have used them as stepping-stones for personal advancement and forced these remarkable traditional communicators to live in penury.

If you want to know what it is like to die a living death, hear their life story. How governments, politicians and bureaucrats have got together to wipe them off the face of rural Bharat.

The author is Director, The Social Work & Research Centre, Tilonia, Rajasthan

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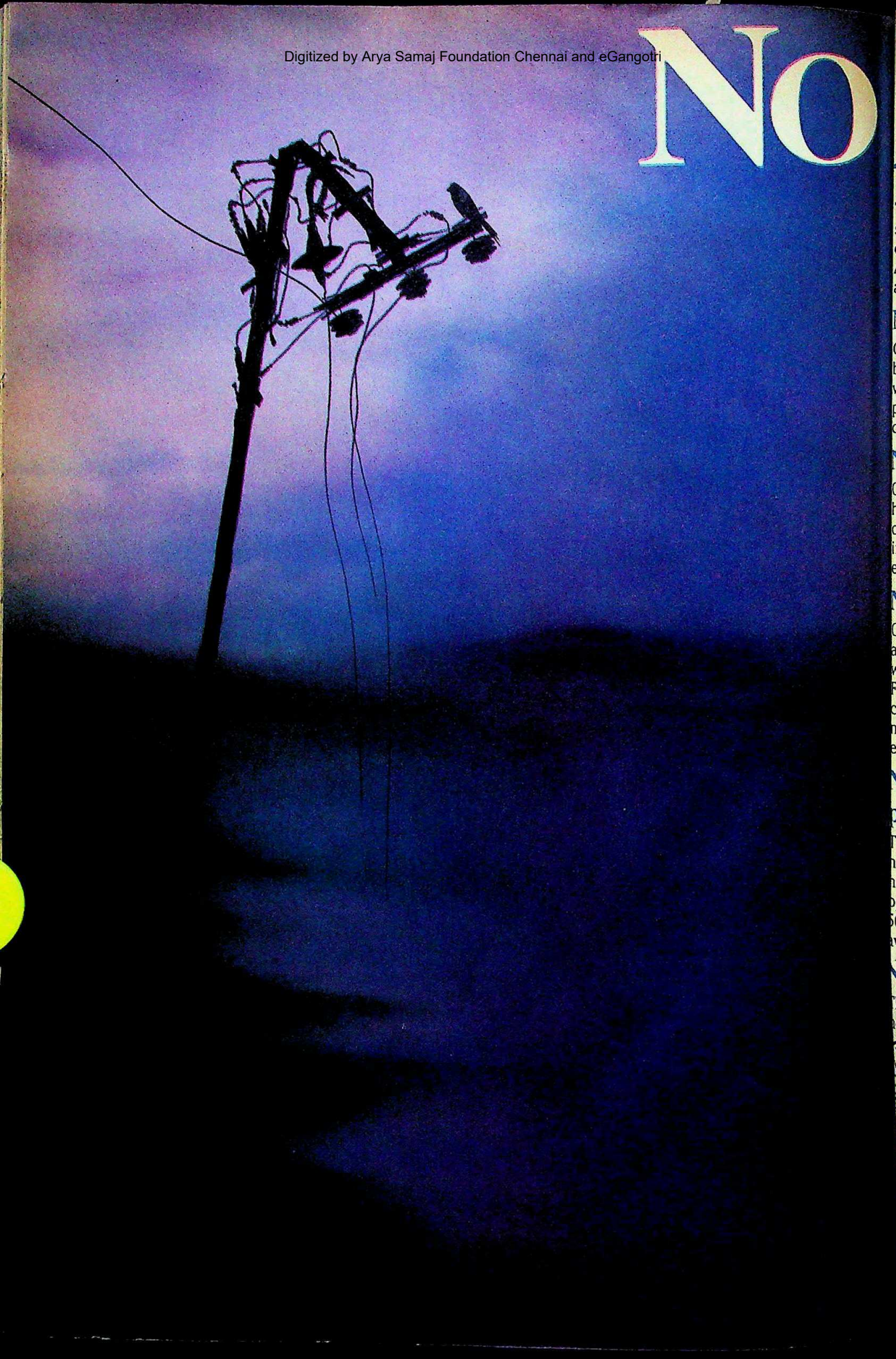
3 YEAR GUARANTEE

ALLWYN QUARTZ

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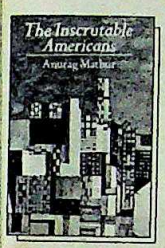
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Virgin Abroad

Readable, but lacks depth

THE INSCRUTABLE AMERICANS
by ANURAG MATHUR
Rupa Books
Price: Rs 40; Pages: 247



HIS father is a hair oil baron in Jajau, a one bullock town in Madhya Pradesh. His notions of America have been dutifully culled from the *Collected Letters from Penthouse* and *Deep Throat*. "Ass" to him is an animal, not a fleshy part of the anatomy, and randy is the way one can't help feeling sometimes, not a name.

Gopal, the hero of Anurag Mathur's *The Inscrutable Americans* arrives at a small university campus in America determined to eat vegetarian food (preferably cooked by Brahmins). Moreover, he is bent upon avoiding American women and other unhealthy habits.

The novel is Gopal's journey of discovery, of himself and of America, with a little of Christopher Columbus and a lot of Eddie Murphy, where shallow humour rubs shoulders with touching observation. Gopal is the archetypal bumpkin from the backwoods of Madhya Pradesh leering breathlessly at the lush blondes spread across billboards as he bumps along in his brief tryst with the American Dream.

Gopal's exaggerated Indian English, forever in the present continuous tense, might grate on the odd occasion but his naivete and his native wit are sure to bowl readers over. In one happy, sad, funny, cruel, eventful year Gopal is propositioned by pimps, celebrated in doggerel, mugged by racists and toasted in chemistry class.

While he unfailingly applies national hair oil on his scalp, he breaks some other taboos: he eats beef (unknowingly), gets drunk (and throws up), and loses his virginity (in spite of himself). He also makes friends, earns a diploma and learns to love the country that he discovers has much more to it than just free sex and limitless quantities of Coca Cola. And when he returns home to Jajau, Gopal leaves behind a few enlightened Americans, who learn from this bumbling yet intelligent ambassador that there is more to India than the *Kamasutra* and curry powder.

The Inscrutable Americans is no great literary adventure, but a heartwarming, eminently readable book by a promising young author. Thematically rather simple and lacking a certain dramatic depth the novel, however, compensates with its contemporaneity and its very simplicity. Gopal is sure to find a soulmate in every Indian arriving by the planeload at American airports everyday, head full of preconceptions and heart full of hope.

—KAVITHA SHETTY

EXCERPT

A very tall, very good looking black man, dressed in a breathtakingly beautiful grey overcoat, sauntered past. When Gopal tried his We're-All-New Yorkers-Smile, he smiled right back. Gopal was thrilled at being accepted by one of the elite New Yorkers.

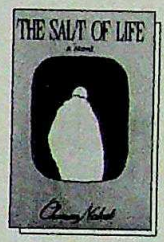
"You looking for some fun?" the man asked politely. His voice was low and husky. It felt like a cat rubbing its fur on Gopal. "I am having a very good time, hee hee," modestly acknowledged Gopal. "I knew it right away," said the man putting a brotherly arm around Gopal's shoulder. "The moment I saw you I said, 'here's a man who knows how to have a good time'."

His voice had a sincerity and sibilance that inserted itself into Gopal's skin. "Now you come along with me and we'll have a little old party, won't we?" "No, no," said Gopal, "I have to wait for Sunil". "Hey, man," said the black, the velvet voice starting to harden, "Don't give me none of that." His voice softened again. "You know what I got for you?" His voice was so soft it fell like candy floss over Gopal. "Well, my man, my main man, what I got is some real live ***** for you. How about that now?" "No, thank you, sir," said Gopal, shaking himself loose, "But I'm vegetarian."

Without Tang

A flat potpourri of history

THE SALT OF LIFE
by CHAMAN NAHAL
Allied
Price: Rs 225; Pages: 546



AT first it seems that the author is trying to do an Eric Ericsson: a psycho-portrait of Mahatma Gandhi, warts, lustful thoughts and all.

But this potpourri which calls itself a novel is neither fact nor fiction. Nor is it what one supposes the author set out to write: an historical novel. It is the third volume in university professor Chaman Nahal's quartet on the Indian freedom movement.

The Salt of Life is more like a library-novel: large chunks of history, dates included, are sandwiched between the various sub-plots and narratives regardless of any reason for their being there. They don't push the narrative any further. Nor do they enhance the characterisation very much.

They are just there, undigested bits of gleanings from old newspapers and history books and perhaps a vast reservoir of personal memories. Consider this excursion into Nehru-lore when Nehru takes his wife to Switzerland: "Taking her and Indira, he had sailed for Europe in March 1926, returning to India after more than a year in December 1927." The reason for the Swiss aside: Nehru's *coup de foudre* (when for a moment he thought that India needed a Lenin rather than a Gandhi), for Soviet Russia, the invitation for the 10th anniversary of the Soviet Revolution reached him there.

It is also the occasion for some of the inspired prose of this book. "...what he saw there was sufficient to set off many storms in his storm-prone chest."

The novel spans, as the blurb says, "a vast canvas of the Indian freedom movement from 1930 to 1941" with a mostly uneasy Mahatma at its epicentre. Into it are thrown Bhagat Singh, Jawaharlal Nehru and it seems an attendant Motilal Nehru, Subhash Chandra Bose and a host of white men and women looking for themselves. The last, it seems, were the prototypes

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of latter day hippies who saw India as a sort of horizonless lost and found department. Long lost loves are found. Souls re-soled. Meaning-in-life attained. Nirvana came later: this Indian speciality of the post-'60s was not on the menu then.

Perhaps, Gandhi's life has been too well documented to allow fictional inroads. Certainly, fictionalised dialogue can appear surreal, if not awkward. "Let's walk, Bapu," said Kusum, adjusting her sari. "No, let's talk," said Gandhi, adjusting his glasses. "Ah, my Mahatma husband," muttered Ba. (Kasturba Gandhi's irony-laced insights into her husband, for instance the clever *bania* at heart that he was,

EXCERPT

It was around her pelvis that the maximum lights were lit. She was aghast, wonderstruck and vibrant, from her scalp to the soles of her feet, but it was in her middle, in her lateral, sloping, tightly held, nascent nimble core, in the moist ingress, that the riot was on. And the rest of her organs around the area, her bowls (sic), her bladder, her urethra, her omentum, her lower abdominal ridges, all pushed through the lining of her kernel to see what the storm and the upheaval, the churning Vishal was causing there, was like.

are the best things about the book).

Then there are those lustful thoughts about which Gandhi himself has probably had the last word. "This moment he was asking Kusum about the Gita. Yet what he was thinking about was the chemistry of her body."

A saving grace of the book is the portrait of the sensual Kusum (some sizzling interior monologues), the young widow who appears to personify the robustness and resilience of the Punjab for Mahatma Gandhi. Incidentally, the idea of the Dandi March came when he dropped in on Kusum giving the children at the Sabarmati Ashram a lesson on metals. A lesson in which she asks the children whether they would like to walk down to the sea to make some salt.

The Salt of Life ought to have had some tang in it, some bite. Instead, it's like processed salt, ersatz and tasteless.

—MADHU JAIN

In Memoriam

A fine tribute to talent

THE CONTEMPORARY CONSERVATIVE: Selected Writings of Dhiren Bhagat
Edited by SALMAN KHURSHID
Viking
Price: Rs 175; Pages: 392



IN *The Sunday Observer* of February 13, 1983, Dhiren Bhagat wrote an obituary on me mourning the loss of the scotch-sodden columnist who made false claims to being a champion womaniser when all that had warmed his bed in the preceding 30 years was a hot water bottle. In December 1988 I wrote Dhiren Bhagat's obituary.

The score was more than settled in my favour as I, 40 years older than him, am alive; Dhiren had met his end in a car accident a month earlier in November. I have yet a score unsettled. I persuaded my colleague David Davidar, editor of Penguin India, to give Dhiren Bhagat an advance royalty of Rs 20,000, for a book on the Punjab. He signed a contract agreeing to give us the manuscript within six months. We kept track of him through many articles he wrote on different aspects of the Punjab problem. But he always had an excuse for not sticking to the agreed deadlines. His girl-friend had ditched him and his mind was too disturbed to get down to anything serious. While at Anandpur Sahib to see the *hola mohalla* celebrations he had been knocked down by a Nihang on horseback—"Can't you see I am still limping?"

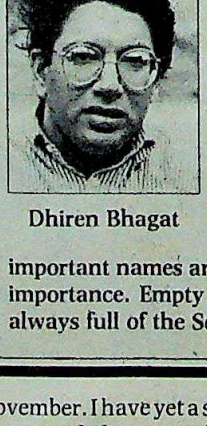
More than a year after the deadline had passed he offered to return the advance. He never did so. It was the first and the last time we gave an advance to any of our authors. Perhaps the sales of his posthumous collection of articles, short stories and poems may compensate for our loss. But nothing will compensate for the loss that Indian journalism suffered on the death of this bright, erudite, but unpredictable young man in the prime of his life.

The Contemporary Conservative fairly represents the maturing of Dhiren Bhagat's talent from infancy to his last days. He started composing rhymed verses at the age of eight, continued doing so in school in Ajmer and college in Oxford. They show that though he may not have flowered into a major poet or a writer, he might well have become one of India's top journalists. He was hardworking, abstemious, a teetotaller who didn't even drink tea or coffee; he was a vegetarian and a non-smoker and ambitious. After a brash start trying to attract attention by writing rude articles about established writers, he soon acquired self-confidence and turned out some memorable pieces. He strove for excellence and achieved it in some measure.

Appropriately, at the end is a restrained but moving tribute paid by Mrs Bhagat to her only child.

—KHUSHWANT SINGH

EXCERPT



Dhiren Bhagat

I was saddened to read that Khushwant Singh passed away in his sleep last week. What a quiet end for so loud a man. How the gods mock the mocking.

Contradictions surrounded Khushwant at every stage of his life. He strove to give the impression that he was a drunken slob yet he was one of the most hard-working and punctual men I knew. He professed agnosticism and yet enjoyed *kirtan* as only a few can and do. He was known nationally as a celebrated lecher but for the past thirty years at least it was a hot-water bottle that warmed his bed; He made a profession of living off his friends' important names and yet worked single-handedly to diminish that very importance. Empty vessels make the most noise but Khushwant was always full of the Scotch he had cadged off others.

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Art

SUNIL GAWDE ehangir Art Gallery, Bomay). After a long time, a how of abstract art by a ainter is getting rave reiews. Colour, texture, line nd light dominate 30-yearld Sunil Gawde's canvas as e focuses on an exploration form and space. In his oils, e conveys an exuberant vion as broad bands of colour e dissected by dancing nes and paint-encrusted dges, conveying the drama nd energy of nature.

ATIONAL ART CAMP Kerala Lalit Kala Akademi, onmudi). Ponmudi, near lvandrum, saw hectic acvity last fortnight as 22 inters let their imaginaon run riot. The results: 33 orks in 10 days of amiable itiques, impromptu semiars and discussions. All of em will now be part of a w gallery in Ernakulam. mong the objects of venation were Bhupen akhar, Manu Parekh, dhir Patwardhan, R.S. askar and S.G. Vasudev.

Movies

SHIVA (proced by A. Purnachandra o; starring Nagarjuna, ghuvaran, Amala). What t about our collective psye that responds to vioce, especially at the boxlce? *Shiva* moves in a dscape of blood and ath. Shiva is a college stunt who wants to make a ent living. Then his girlnd is attacked and he ks up a bicycle chain in ence. From then on, the traces his growth in vioce to his chieftainship of a llante group paralleling police. How did the cen let it through? Just bese it is the Hindi launch for Telugu superstar arjuna? Or are they also ng immune to gore?

Dance

INDIA INTERNATIONAL DANCE FESTIVAL (Indian Council for Cultural Relations and Sangeet Natak Akademi, in seven cities including New Delhi). The festival dished out a delectable smorgasbord of dance from more than 20 countries. While the Occident was represented by the avant garde Nickolais and Murray Dance Troupe, the Orient sent in the Kanze School of Noh from Japan with a rich repertoire of minimalist, brocaded styles. While Takasago was too ritualistic to make sense, the Kiev Ballet's Swan Lake is eagerly awaited. The Indian groups were impressive especially the Jawaharlal Nehru Manipur Dance Academy's Basanta Raas.

SHARAD SAXENA



Japanese dance: rich style

Food

ZODIAC GRILL (Taj Mahal Hotel, Bombay). The year-old restaurant has finally taken guesswork out of its pricing. Now it's Rs 450 per head, minus the drinks. The flat rate comes with a longer chow-list for a meal, which includes novelties like Prawn Malibu (prawns in coconut liqueur), Consomme Auriga (a lobster soup garnished with caviar), and a vegetarian fare of seven dishes, including Ratatouille. Deserts include Nougatine Parfait and Strawberry Nassau.

Music

LEKIN (lyrics by Gulzar; music by Hridaynath Mangeshkar; sung by Lata Mangeshkar and Suresh Wadkar; HMV; Rs 20.50). The music for the first film produced by Lata Mangeshkar, a blend of Hindustani classical and Rajasthani folk is soothing and soulful in the genre of *Umrao Jaan*. But being a drastic change from the usual Mumbaiya film music, is unlikely to top the charts.

VIENNA MOZART QUARTET (Bombay, Calcutta). Vienna's most famous son is Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart. As a curtain-raiser to the bicentennial, in 1991, of his death, the Vienna Mozart Quartet, consisting of musicians who teamed up in 1989 to promote his music, performed in Bombay and Calcutta. It was a treat for western classical music buffs, leavened with period costumes—wigs, swallow-tail coats, buckled shoes and all.



The Vienna Mozart Quartet: rare treat

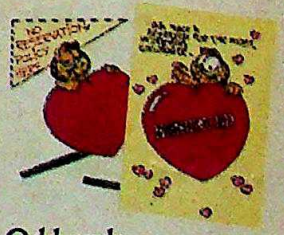
Books

THE LIMCA BOOK OF RECORDS (1991). Mercifully, this second edition has most bloomers edited out. The first looked slapped together, but this is better researched. The book mainly consists of sports records.

THE MAMBO KINGS PLAY SONGS OF LOVE by Oscar Hijuelos (Penguin; Rs 89). Jazz, mambo, rumba, and Cuban musicians purveying them in the '50s—this Pulitzer Prize winner celebrates the hedonistic existence. Reminiscent of Kerouac's *On the Road* in its energy, and of Marquez in its evocation of a seemingly magical world.

Theatre

DREAM OF REASON (directed by Anamika Haksar, Shri Ram Centre Auditorium, New Delhi). Staged by Nirakar, it is taxing on the intellect. Goya, the Spanish painter, is troubled by the royal Philistinism he sees around him. The torture is portrayed through Goya's relationship with his housekeeper. As a dying man who loves life fiercely, his life seems to be a wasteland.



Odd ends

GARFIELD AND RESERVATIONS (Cards by Dushyant Parasher; Aaditya Chandra Prakashan). A greeting cards conveys affections. But these cards take off on reservations and link them with Garfield: "I'm not anti-reservation—I want my place reserved in your heart."

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Stretching the Luxury

◆ Off the flight—and into another jet. For VVIPs in his presidential suites (Rs 12,000 a night), the controversial **Lalit Suri**, chairman of Bharat Hotels has a new perk: a 32-ft stretch Cadillac purring at the airport—with in-flight luxuries like a TV, video, stereo, and even a bar. Suri, who got the six-door, second-hand cruiser from Dubai for Rs 12 lakh says that it is the only one of its kind in India. When asked if he would loan it to Rajiv Gandhi for electioneering, Suri, a staunch Congress(I) supporter said: "It would make a good rath." Obviously, on the last s-t-r-e-t-c-h to power.

BHAWAN SINGH



Suri's limo: rolling on luxury



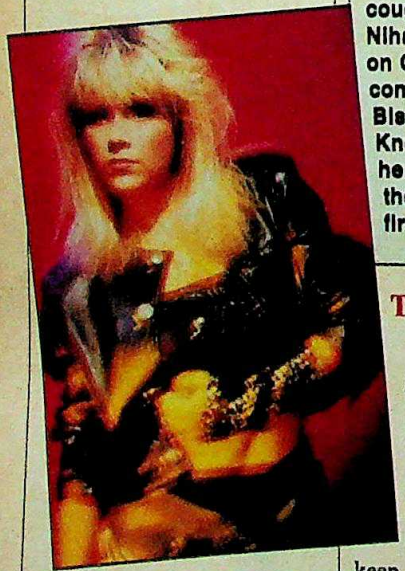
Moon Moon with daughters

New Kid in Town

◆ Suchitra Sen got swept away by an *Aandhi*. Moon Moon Sen went into eclipse even before she rose. Now the third generation is appearing on the horizon: nine-year-old Riya who, like mother and grandmother, will begin her affair with Hindi films in *Vishkanya*. Directed by Jagmohan Mundhra, Riya plays Moon Moon and Kabir Bedi's little daughter—when she grows up on screen, she turns into Pooja Bedi. Which has mama a little worried. Already Riya—and her older sister Raima—are swooning over Aamir Khan. "From now onwards, a film career is out for the kids," says Moon Moon firmly. "Studies come first." Mother knows best.

Bawdy Rock

◆ *Touch me, I want your body*. Good news Samantha, so do a million young men in India. Next week, pin-up diva **Samantha Fox**, will sing for India. Samantha, 24, who shot to the top of the charts with *Touch me* also climbed to the top of male erogenous zones with her pin-ups. "I get heaps of letters from fans in India," said Fox who is better seen than heard. As soon as she landed in India, the Fox trot off to Goa for a little nirvana. Now, she's all ready to touch.



Fox: heart stealer

A Cold Note

◆ **The *Guinness* record holder for the maximum number of songs sung, *Lata Mangeshkar*, can afford anything today—except a sore throat. So the melody queen agreed to do something for the cause of the cough. For the first time she acted in an advertisement: for Glycodin, the tough cough syrup. Shot by Govind Nihalani, it is the first in a series on Great Masters—the others who come in from the cold include Bismillah Khan and Bhimsen Joshi. Known always for the "moonlight in her throat" Lata is embarrassed by the attention. Said she: "This is the first and last commercial I do."**

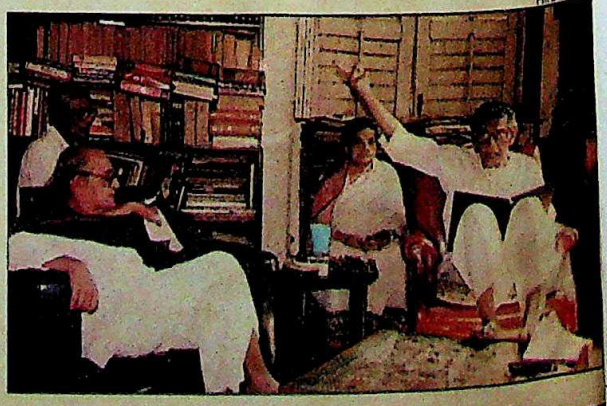


Cartoon by JAYANTO

The Master in Fast Forward

◆ After years of illness, **Satyajit Ray** is suddenly into fourth gear. His latest film *Shakha Proshakha* is hardly over than the immortal Ray has hit the accelerator again, with *Agantuk* (Stranger), a film that he wrote up in just 15 days. Says Ray who turns 70 in May and who has never managed two films in one year before: "*Agantuk* has a lot of comedy for starters but I want to keep the theme a surprise." Also, the day the shooting for the new film began, Ray achieved another kind of immortality: a grandson was born to him. But he refused to pose for a picture saying he was too scared to hold the baby.

HIRAK SEN



Ray: going strong

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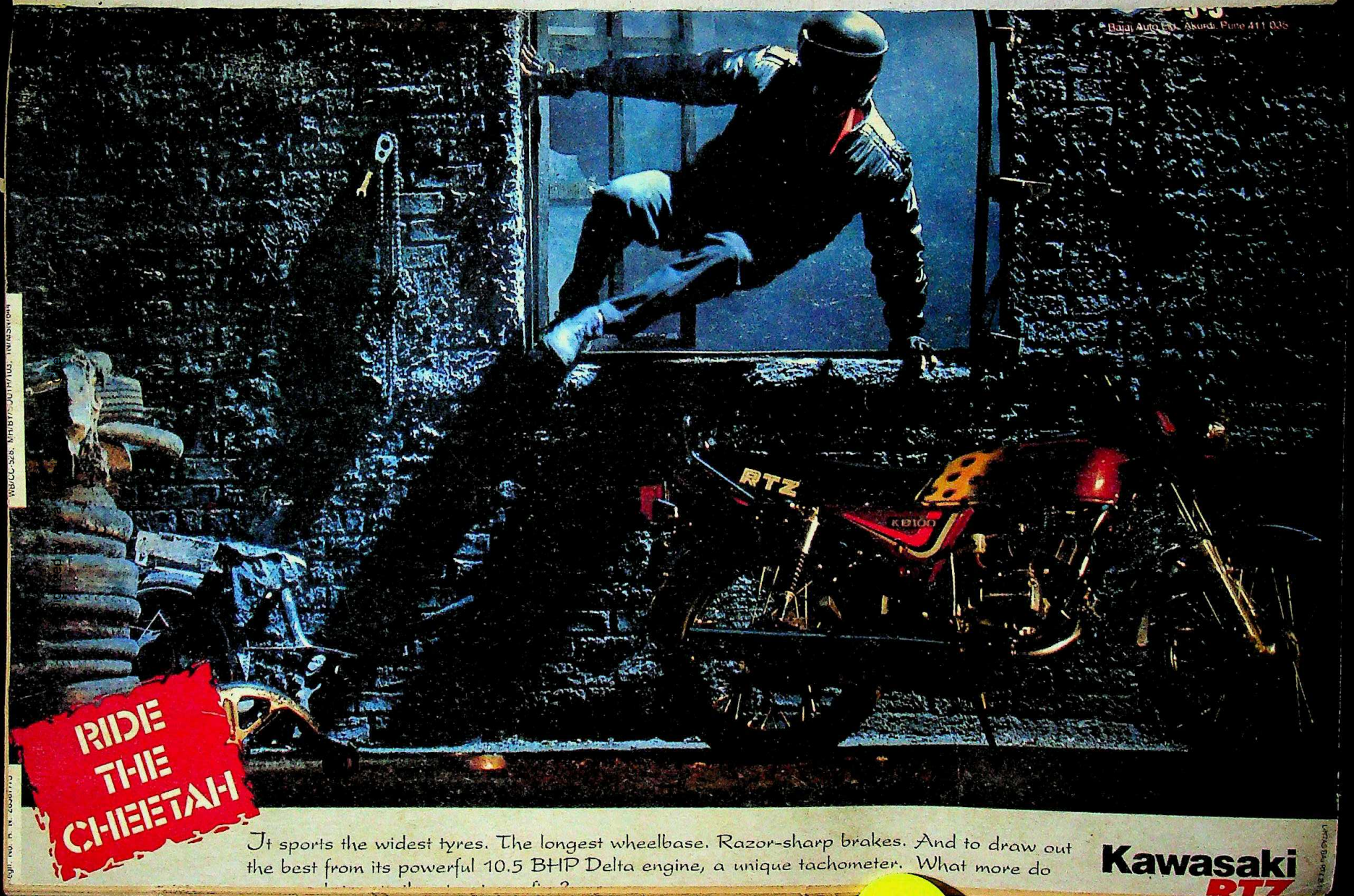
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